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ABSTRACT

This annual collection focuses on the obligation of higher education to democracy. Scholars from a variety if disciplines explore this question and related issues, such as the civic mission of the university, what it means to be an "engaged" university, and how a university can itself by a "good citizen." Following a foreword by Deborah Witte, the articles in the collection are: (1) "Public Environmental Philosophy: An Interview with Andrew Light"; (2) "'New York, New York': Community-Based Learning in the Context of September 11" (Maria Farland and Jennifer Santos); (3) "The Engaged University: An Interview with Peter Levine" (Peter Levine); (4) "Strategies for Involving the Faculty in Civic Renewal" (Barry Checkoway); (5) "Democracy's Universities: An Interview with Scott Peters" (Scott Peters); (6) "'The Metaphysical Club'" (Louis Menand); and (7) "Afterword" (David Mathews). Each chapter contains references. (SLD)

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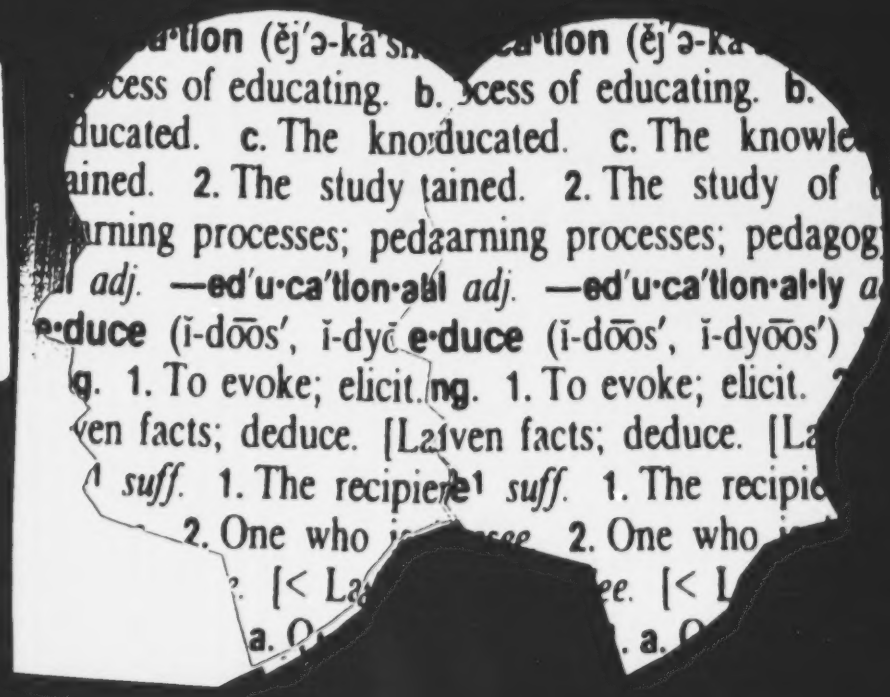


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| Copy Editor | Betty Frecker |
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The *Higher Education Exchange* is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

> I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

In the tradition of Jefferson, the *Higher Education Exchange* agrees that a central goal of higher education is to help make democracy possible by preparing citizens for public life. The *Higher Education Exchange* is part of a movement to strengthen higher education's democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture throughout American society. Working in this tradition, the *Higher Education Exchange* publishes case studies, analyses, news, and ideas about efforts within higher education to develop more democratic societies.

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# FOREWORD

## By Deborah Witte

What is higher education's obligation to democracy? For some time, this has been a driving question behind Kettering's work in higher education. Through this journal and seminars here at Kettering, we gather scholars from a variety of disciplines to explore this question and others like it — questions about the civic mission of the university, what it means to be an "engaged" university, and how a university can be a "good citizen."

Oftentimes, these discussions can merely be the choir singing to itself. While there is a small, yet growing, group of university faculty, administrators, and trustees who regularly engage these questions, such discussions are usually on the periphery of higher education's agenda.

But in this time of great insecurity throughout the world, when the struggle for democracy is brought home to us each day via radio and television, these questions of obligation are suddenly and forcefully at the forefront of conversation on campuses. They may be stated differently, the question might be: "What role should the university play in the national discussion?" as a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* headline reads, or presented as "The Responsibility of Universities at a Time of International Tension and Domestic Protest," as the Association of American Universities (AAU) titled their statement to the membership last January. But isn't this merely another way of asking, What is higher education's obligation to democracy?

I've often heard it said there is no passion or energy behind this question, it's simply an abstract kind of scholarly question of limited interest to academics and of even less interest to the general public. But as young men and women are called to war — the men and women of the same generation as most of those students who populate our universities — can there be any more important question before us? If it is true that democracy must be pertinent before the work of citizen-creating and public-making will be relevant to higher education, well, isn't that time now?

Higher education has often been accused of the propensity to

focus inwardly. Discussions of tenure, rankings, access, the privatization of knowledge, and academic freedom consume a lot of energy on the college campus. Higher education should be encouraged now to reflect on its identity and historic role as an agent of American democracy and consider the identity it hopes to carry into the future.

Recent public opinion research tells us the public believes higher education is important. The public is satisfied with the quality of education colleges and universities supply. They express a general concern with the cost of a college education (though not the *value* of that education.) However, they have a strictly careerist and utilitarian view of higher education. What is striking because of its omission is any mention of the democracy-higher education connection. How do we engage more faculty, administrators, trustees, and *the public* in a dialogue about higher education's obligation to turn outward to community and toward democracy?

The AAU statement mentioned earlier says, in part, it is "essential that university presidents and chancellors consider carefully their responsibilities"; that the university "provide a forum in which individuals and groups can advocate their views . . . assure an environment for civil discourse, protect the rights of all, fulfill the obligations to academic freedom and intellectual development. The university must actively promote informed dialogue, analytical thought and exemplary arguments through teach-ins and seminars." It must afford a "space for dissent and demonstrations." I would add deliberation to that list.

While the articles in this issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* do not frame their arguments around this question of the obligation of higher education to democracy or address the current war in any overt way, they do address the promise, readily apparent in scholarly efforts, of higher education's relevance to living democratically in community.

Andrew Light, a professor at New York University in his first appearance in this journal, suggests scholars need to consider whether the work they are engaged in has meaning for the broader community. While not ignoring the fate of "second-class status" for those engaged in practical research, he encourages faculty to demonstrate the relevance of what they do and move beyond this perception. Throughout his interview with *Higher Education Exchange* coeditor David Brown is the undertone of a yearning, a yearning to make an impact on the larger society. Light understands the "all-too-common disdain for our democratic

traditions," but vows to make a very real contribution to questions of public policy . . . "rather than retreat into a radical discourse that may never have had much purchase." He cautions against the "fashionable positioning of ourselves as outside the mainstream." And adds, "We are no longer courting irrelevance by taking such positions. We have become irrelevant."

In the next article, Maria Farland and Jennifer Santos, a faculty member and student, respectively, at Fordham University, share in a volley of reflections and impressions, the story of the effect of September 11 on their lives. Farland, a professor of English, uses community-based learning in an effort to "forge a sense of shared community around the shared personal landscapes and environment of the city." This desire to create a sense of shared community is heightened by the events of 9/11. As Santos writes, I "realized the city's personal importance in our lives." The attempt to make learning personal, while at the same time political, is at the heart of Farland's challenge as a teacher. While students repeatedly cite community-based learning as the most important part of their educational experience, it is important faculty do not simplify or romanticize community, she warns us. The tendency to substitute therapeutic self-awareness for a more complicated sense of the community's problems and challenges must be avoided.

Peter Levine, a familiar name to readers of this journal and a research fellow in the Institute for Public Policy at the University of Maryland, provides numerous examples of public intellectuals on his campus, as well as other campuses. He endorses the value of the "public intellectual" as a prime mover of public work initiatives. He argues for the "need to hold institutions to the same ethic of good democratic citizens that we try to instill in students." He challenges us to consider the behavior of universities as economic and political institutions.

Barry Checkoway, in the next article, concentrates on strategies for involving faculty in the civic renewal of the university. He suggests that the perceived academic culture runs contrary to civic work, yet shows that empirical evidence fails to substantiate this perception. Why the disconnect? Checkoway urges faculty to examine their history of civic involvement as well as the history of tenure to recapture and redefine a historic role of "moral responsibility characterized by commitment to an institutional mission serving a greater civic purpose or social good." Faculty have a role to play in preparing students for democratic participation and Checkoway offers several practical ways to accomplish this goal.

Scott Peters, professor of education at Cornell University, in another interview with David Brown, tackles the question of the democratic identity of the university. Through a research project he is conducting with several colleagues, he is discovering that a democratic or civic mission impulse motivates a lot of faculty. Even though most faculty don't have much experience with, understanding of, or awareness of, the evolution of such a democratic identity, the civic mission in land grant history inspires them. He concludes by asking, "What can universities do to help people and communities deal with crisis?"

Lisa Morrison, a doctoral fellow at the Kettering Foundation, in a review of *The Metaphysical Club,* explains Louis Menand's history of the origins of pragmatism, the notion that ideas are "social and evolving rather than abstract and absolute, that knowledge is produced by groups, not found by individuals." Tracing the philosophical lives of Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James, Charles Saunders Peirce, and Thomas Dewey, Menand asserts the importance of the Civil War in leading each of them to "look for a conception of belief and judgment that would eschew certainty." In fact, it is the horrible life-altering experience of the violent battle of war, that led Holmes to profess, "certainty leads to violence." Pragmatism as an education philosophy means that higher education should not be reserved for those elite few deemed qualified to discover immutable ideas, but rather it should be open and relevant to everyone who copes with the world.

As these articles illustrate, the immediacy of the question, What is higher education's obligation to democracy? is evident and pressing. Dialogue about this issue is needed as never before. We hope you will join us in continuing the conversation.

# PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY:

## An interview with Andrew Light

*David Brown, coeditor of the* Higher Education Exchange, *spoke with Andrew Light, an environmental philosopher at New York University, currently on leave at the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin to finish a book manuscript on ethical issues in restoration ecology. Brown was interested in learning more about the public dimensions of Light's recent work in applied philosophy.*

**Brown:** Richard Rorty in his 1997 Massey lectures argues that "Analytic philosophy still attracts first-rate minds, but most of these minds are busy solving problems that no nonphilosopher recognizes as problems: problems that hook up with nothing outside the discipline." Has your academic journey been a way of addressing Rorty's concern?

**Light:** In part, my approach may be a way of addressing Rorty's concerns though I don't think it was ever self-consciously designed to do so. I was trained in an analytic graduate program in the early to mid-1990s in Southern California (UC Riverside). It would be a stretch, however, to call what I do now "analytic philosophy" (and there is even some dispute about what that really means any way other than a way of distinguishing one set of approaches from those traditions, which started in continental Europe). Still, I have the utmost respect for everyone who does that sort of work well. Residual parts of my analytic training are at the core of the way I look at and analyze philosophical problems.

Rorty is no doubt correct that much work in mainstream philosophy departments is focused on the kind of questions that most people wouldn't recognize as important, or maybe even recognize as coherent questions at all. Without a translation to a language understandable to a broader audience, the discussions that occur around a seminar table will seem entirely alien to most people. And even though the chief virtue of analytic philosophy is its clarity and elegance of argument, this clarity can be lost on anyone not steeped in the tradition. The best work in this vein should be written in such a way that anyone can get something out of it with sufficient guidance. This doesn't mean, however, that a piece in *The Journal of*

*Philosophy* is bad simply because it isn't something that would be of interest or understandable to anyone other than those inside the same conversation. Every academic discipline has its own lingua franca that seems alienating from the outside, and much of what happens across the academy seems bizarre at first to the uninitiated.

For this reason, I don't see this claim by Rorty as unique as a criticism of analytic philosophy. Does that mean that the academy as a whole would benefit from a stronger attempt to connect itself with questions people outside the academy would find interesting and compelling? Certainly. Across the board we ought to think about whether the work we are engaged in has either direct public purchase or at least can be extended at times to a broader audience in language they could better understand. This doesn't mean a popular agenda needs to drive all philosophical or other academic work. It means instead that we are remiss if we can't sometimes demonstrate to the broader public the relevance of what we do. Especially in philosophy this is a problem because without connecting what we do to broader public issues we are destroying the public utility of philosophy. At this rate, philosophy will eventually become only a curiosity sometimes brushed up against in universities and at sophisticated cocktail parties rather than what it truly is, namely, a fundamentally important self-reflective activity that can help to make our lives richer, more interesting, and hopefully make us more responsible to others.

I think the more pressing problem, which I've not seen Rorty address, is the second-class citizenship of those of us in philosophy departments or in the broader academy who actually do focus more directly on important questions of public interest or public policy in our work. Perhaps this is because Rorty has long held secure positions outside of philosophy departments at Virginia and Stanford. The applied philosophies of bioethics, environmental ethics, business ethics, engineering ethics, philosophy of technology and other fields are considered, at best, less prestigious fields of philosophy and, at worst, "not really philosophy." In this regard I've been lucky to find an unusual position for someone working in environmental ethics: in a school of education that has a broad enough mandate to both make room for someone like me who doesn't work directly on issues in education but also wants to produce work for a broader academic and nonacademic audience. What pains me, though, is when many

talented applied philosophers take the sense of second-class citizenship they are usually subjected to, and try to do their work in such a way that it is less publicly engaging than it actually could be.

If one is going to do environmental ethics in such a way that it actually may have some effect on the way environmental policies are formed, or will be informative to broader debates concerning the environment with people who will actually make decisions about it, then the field can't be just another arena for ethical theory like our colleagues who work in more traditional forms of metaethics and normative ethics. But sadly, either because of the systems of reward in graduate schools, the pressures of the profession, or the sociological dynamics of a subfield like this one in relation to the larger discipline, more people than not in my field do environmental ethics in such a way that it does not address problems most environmental advocates, activists, and practitioners would recognize as problems. Sometimes, I think this shows the limitations of the latter groups, and philosophers do a good service by pointing out to the broader community, questions they may not have taken up before. More often, I think it is a case of philosophers fiddling while the world burns — in this case literally burns — simply because it is easier for them to work on questions that are only of interest to other philosophers and do not require a more empirical understanding of either the science, sociology, or politics of the environment. For some time now, I've been developing a methodology for environmental ethics, which I call "environmental pragmatism" designed to encourage more philosophers to produce work with greater policy relevance.

*"I think it is a case of philosophers fiddling while the world burns."*

**Brown:** On that note, you have said that "environmental pragmatism … is simply a methodology permitting environmental philosophers to endorse a pluralism allowing for one kind of philosophical task inside the philosophical community — searching for the 'real' value of nature — and another task outside of that community — articulating a value for nature that resonates with the public and, therefore, has more impact on discussions of projects such as ecological restorations, which may be performed by the public." Why should the two tasks be kept separate?

**Light:** The idea here is pretty detailed and I won't do it justice in this brief answer, but basically it stems from my adamant stance that the use of something called "pragmatism" in environmental ethics, or any applied ethics for that matter, shouldn't amount to a new side to the metaethical debates too often domi-

nating these applied fields of philosophy.

As my work in this field has evolved, I've become more and more convinced environmental ethics needed a push away from traditional philosophical debates and toward environmental issues, which had more purchase in the actual formation of public policies. I wanted to create a form of pragmatism on environmental questions that allowed environmental ethicists to make a contribution to the field in such a way that their work would be more relevant to questions of public policy or activism, without requiring them to abandon their considered philosophical views that would have stemmed from other general philosophical perspectives. For me, then, the pragmatist line of thinking in environmental ethics shouldn't require environmental ethicists to become Deweyans or Jamesians. It should instead require them to simply do their work in a more accessible and publicly engaged way, and most importantly, whenever possible, to embrace a kind of pluralism that allows them to see that a good moral or political argument for environmental protection need not require people to give up their ordinary moral intuitions about why nature is valuable.

My kind of pragmatist approach to environmental ethics (which I call a "methodological pragmatism") is directed not so much at trying to describe what the value of nature is that we have direct moral obligations to it but that ethicists should try to use their talents to translate the agreed-upon ends of the environmental community (which are derived from a variety of perspectives for a variety of reasons) into language that the broader public will find most morally motivating to them — such as arguments for our environmental obligations to future generations, which we empirically know are the sorts of reasons that most people think are why we should have stronger forms of environmental legislation.

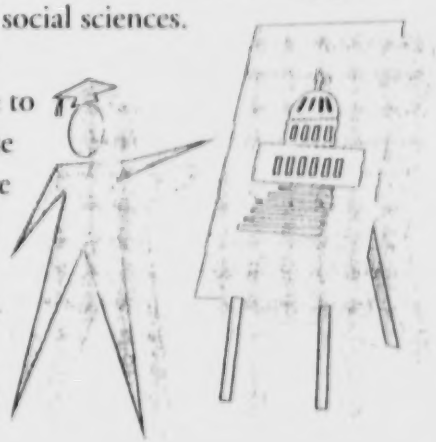
The reasons why the two tasks of my pragmatism should be separate is entirely strategic. The goal is to get more of my colleagues in the field to make arguments I think will be more useful in the arenas of public policy, and hence make a place for our discipline in the environmental professions in a way medical ethicists have successfully made a place for themselves in the medical professions. By separating out first a philosophical task, I'm telling my colleagues there is nothing wrong with their pursuing purely philosophical interests from whatever perspective they choose,

pragmatist or not. But then by offering a second task, which I call "environmental public philosophy," I'm suggesting that when there is convergence on the ends of environmental policy by the environmental community then they can set aside their particular views on some of their philosophical debates. We could make arguments more conversant with the language of public policy to try to encourage the adoption of better environmental policies, which will be the language of obligations in the future, aesthetics and other concerns common to human forms of valuing.

So, if I define the role of a "pragmatist" in environmental ethics as one that does not require my colleagues to become Deweyans if they don't want to be, or to necessarily give up their particular philosophical approaches, then I'm more likely to encourage more of them to actually be pragmatists in this sense. Of course, many people will simply choose to push these two tasks closer together, but by separating them I'm more hopeful about encouraging a shift in the field to one where ethicists are more often at the table where important environmental decisions are made, than is currently the case.

**Brown:** From your experience, is Rorty correct in saying that too many in academia "prefer knowledge to hope"? ("Hopelessness has become fashionable on the Left — principled, theorized, philosophical hopelessness.")

**Light:** Rorty is simply right about this. But maybe this is one case where the philosophical community fares a bit better than the rest of the academy since much of the work of philosophers is not prone to a blithe skepticism toward popular culture, politics, or, more importantly, our institutions of democracy. This is one of Rorty's key themes in *Achieving Our Country*, and it is one reason that I would like to make it required reading for all incoming graduate students in the humanities and social sciences.



I can't claim to understand the genealogy of how the academy came to embrace a fashionably detached sense of hopelessness — whether it was the letdown of the end of the upheavals and revolutions of the 1960s and the subsequent retreat into the academy of radicals or what. But ever since I started doing this, a bit more than ten years now, I've noticed

*"...it's hard to express any kind of hopefulness about anything in academic circles without being laughed out of the room."*

that it's hard to express any kind of hopefulness about anything in academic circles without being laughed out of the room. What's worse is when academics make pronouncements about the state of our political or social spheres they too often speak in full sentences of theory without blushing.

Here's an example. At a recent meeting of the American Association of Geographers, I was asked to comment on a series of papers on community gardening. I listened with frustration as very talented scholars stood up and defended practices such as raising chickens in inner-cities in New Jersey in very abstract language on the grounds that these practices represented resistance to global monopoly capitalism as it was evinced in the production of genetically modified ("GM") foods. I responded by arguing that the big GM food corporations and the forces that maintain them would go on fairly well unencumbered by a practice like this. Rather than dressing up such an example in the exotic and alienating language of "resistance" to some huge terrible social force, why couldn't we just describe the practice for what it was, namely a nifty bit of community-building that helped to provide a social glue holding people together, as well as putting food on their plates? Why not just defend it in those terms and celebrate it as a sign of hope that our institutions of democratic governance could sustain such expressions of local community?

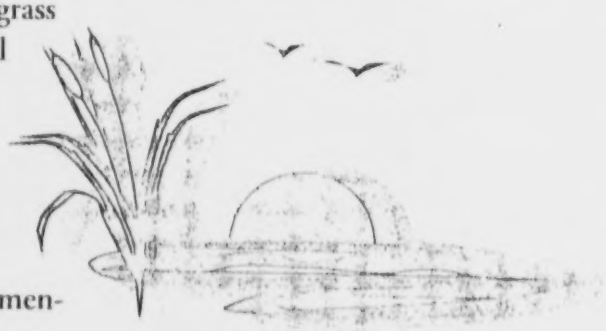
I'll never forget when a graduate student in the audience raised his hand and said he had a question for the "philosopher" (he actually made the quote signs with his fingers) and said that he was surprised by my reply. Evidently, if I had read my Kropotkin I'd understand the role of food production in the maintenance of both capitalism and the state and would understand such practices as true sites of resistance to these entities as their most important function. Bad for him that I actually had read my Kropotkin (even written a bit on him) and so was more than familiar with this line of argument. The point, however, was not one of who could better describe how messed up the world was but how we could actually make an argument to allow a valuable practice like this to be continued using more sober terms. The answer surely was not that we should go to the city council in Newark and tell them about Kropotkin or rail against GM food corporations by way of defending backyard chicken raising. What we could do instead is give them reasons why practices like this help to produce communities that are more cohesive by passing

down from generation to generation something of the traditions of their forebears.

Such celebration of "resistance," along with a too-common disdain for our democratic traditions, is an example of what Rorty sees as our loss of social hope in the academy. The common refrain is that practices by communities to assert their identities can't possibly be compatible with larger democratic practices that are already in bed with what are portrayed as the unambiguously bad forces of capitalism, globalization, etc. But clearly these small pockets of "resistance" can't ever take on those juggernauts. So, while celebrating these practices as resistance to something, we are also encouraged to throw up our hands and accept that everything else outside of these arenas is beyond our control and completely unredeemable. What many of my colleagues in the academy seem to like to forget is such examples of resistance have evolved out of our traditional democratic institutions and practices, not despite them. They could be seen as a way of strengthening the fabric of our social life, rather than representing some kind of alternative to it. From that perspective, it looks to me there are many examples of social hope out there we should be trying to call attention to and expand on them as preserving of our democratic institutions.

**Brown:** How does the importance of expressing social hope affect the focus of your own work?

**Light:** I've been doing a lot of work in the last five years on ecological restoration, which is the practice of restoring damaged ecosystems to some kind of prior ecosystemic health — for example, rebuilding wetlands, tallgrass prairies, and forests. The goal of restoration is to create a healthy and functioning ecosystem that may have existed at a site before. I see these projects as incredibly hopeful signs on the environmental landscape because they are multiplying quickly and are becoming in many places opportunities for local people to get involved in the stewardship of their local environments. Studies on communities engaged in restoration work are very encouraging, showing that restorationists see their activity as not only something that is good for nature but also something that is good for helping bring together the local human communities around them.



*"...strong communities and responsible environmental practices are directly connected to people working the land."*

There's a strain in both environmental writing and democratic theory going back to Jefferson and running forward to figures like Wendell Berry who argues that strong communities and responsible environmental practices are directly connected to people working the land, usually with an emphasis on the small family farm. I see restoration ecology as a possible way of getting more people to embrace local environmental issues without going back to the farms (which, in my opinion, would be a bad idea since I think that sustainability requires that people live more densely than they do now). When people do ecological restorations they have an opportunity to literally work the land around them in such a way that is even more directly concerned with sustainability than some farming practices historically have been.

In Chicago, for example, the dozens of restoration projects known collectively as the "Chicago Wilderness" are designed to restore the city's forest preserves to healthy Oak Savannas, which were arguably in place in the area at the point of white-man contact. It is controversial though, to claim that Oak Savannas were the historically dominant ecosystem in the area at that time. Nonetheless, when volunteers participate in these restorations they come to form a relationship with these natural areas and, with each other, which at bottom produces a positive cultural relationship with nature. The restorations become part of the community members' extended understanding of their cultural ties with others. These restorationists are not only citizens of our country, the state of Illinois, and the city of Chicago, but of the community that has come to care about these particular sites. I'm not just speculating on this phenomena, however. There is now a growing body of sociological evidence that shows people participating in these particular restorations see themselves as fulfilling a kind of moral or political obligation to their larger communities through such activities.

There is, however, still quite a few fashionable academic skeptics of these projects as well. I was astonished a year or so ago to be at a conference on restoration at Harvard and hear a very famous environmental writer dismiss the importance of restoration. Using herself as an example, she said that it would be pointless to try to restore the forests around her home because, after all, we were losing the fight against acid rain and other such phenomena so restorations wouldn't do any good. Another commentator said that clearly, volunteer restorations weren't

important because participation in these projects wouldn't result in a change of people's behavior in a meaningful sense. For example, what do we say about those who volunteer to do a dune restoration and then drive to the site in a SUV? I suppose the point is that the forces of monopoly capitalism and its handmaiden of advertising are just too strong to alleviate such contradictions.

Comments like these just seem off the mark to me and missing the point of the importance of participation in restoration. We can't judge the veracity or utility of a practice like restoration, based on such considerations. This is too high a standard to hold restoration to, when we should actually celebrate it and see the possibility for social hope inherent in the practice. It's not the fault of the efforts to maximize public participation in restorations that acid rain continues to be a problem or that people mistakenly believe that driving SUVs is consistent with their other acts of environmental citizenship. That's just too much to expect. Even if restorations don't solve these larger environmental problems, empirically we know that they still help to build communities and educate people about these larger problems which, in itself, is a good reason to engage in them.

**Brown:** Is public participation essential for ecological restoration?

**Light:** Such public participation in restoration is not required for ecological restorations. In fact, most restorations do not involve as high a degree of public participation as we see in the Chicago case. Many restorations are carried out either privately by landscape design firms or by municipal, state, or federal employees. Sometimes the reason there is not much public participation is because the scale and complexity of some restorations is prohibitive of such participation. The restoration of the Everglades is a good case in point. A lot of this work involves removing concrete channels placed around rivers, which is a good job for the Army Corps of Engineers and a bad job for a local Boy Scout troop. But a surprisingly large amount of these restorations are amenable to public participation.

*"...we should maximize opportunities for people to participate in restorations for moral reasons whenever such participation is feasible."*

My argument has been that we should maximize opportunities for people to participate in restorations for moral reasons whenever such participation is feasible. If I am right that public participation in restoration helps to produce not only valuable environmental services but also more cohesive human communities, then when we engage in a restoration without public



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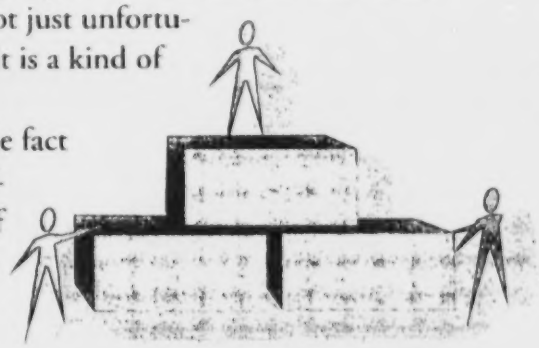
participation where it could have been possible we lose a unique opportunity to connect local people with the land around them. This missed opportunity is not just unfortunate but, rather, I think that it is a kind of moral failing.



Some people bemoan the fact restorations are often not self-sufficient, that for a variety of reasons they require regular maintenance. But I see this instead as a virtue. Take the case of prairie restorations. If a restored tallgrass prairie has to be burned by hand every year to keep it healthy then the requirement of regular maintenance creates an occasion for continually involving the local community in the actual spaces around them. As we see in various parts of the Midwest, prairie festivals designed to do just this have created opportunities for people in a community to regularly renew their sense of stewardship with the land around them, as well as involve new people who didn't participate in the original restoration, in the care of a site. So, no, restorations need not involve public participation, but the best restorations will involve it just as the best restorations will utilize the best design and scientific knowledge suitable for a particular site.

**Brown:** Are the "normative bonds among people" produced by restorations, as you put it, an end in themselves or just a means to get them to embrace more supportive environmental views?

*"I do not believe that the most important priority for us is always an environmental priority."*

**Light:** The normative bonds created in communities that participate in such restorations are certainly ends in themselves and not simply means to getting people to become environmentalists. I do not believe that the most important priority for us is always an environmental priority. It is only one factor among many in most cases, especially those cases that do not involve the fate of an endangered species or similar overriding ecosystemic priority. So, I think it an advantage that restorations can be justified simply on the basis of the social capital that they create, as Robert Putnam would put it, and not simply the environmental services that they produce.

**Brown:** In a recent piece, you discuss the need for "urban citizenship," that goes beyond urban "identity" as they relate to the "care for ecosystems" Could you say more about that?

**Light:** Two things have caused me to turn more toward cities in my work. First is that my research on public participation in ecological restoration has led me to look at a number of urban cases. The reason is pretty straightforward: If you don't have a critical mass of people in an area, then it is hard to get enough people to actually do a restoration. So, many of the best examples of public participation in restoration are near large metropolitan areas. In addition to the Chicago Wilderness projects, one could add the work of the Bronx River Alliance in New York City and also the prairie restorations outside of St. Louis. But another big cause for my turn to urban issues has simply been my move to an urban university. When I lived in western Montana and Alberta, I was more attracted to the local environmental issues there. Moving to the most concentrated urban area in the U.S. has caused me to turn my work to urban issues.

Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to live in a large urban area. Growing up in rural Georgia I always felt that I was missing out on an important component of human culture by not being close to a major metropolitan area. But it wasn't just a conceit of wanting to be in a more sophisticated climate, it was a genuine attraction to the ways we build the spaces around us — no matter where we live — and come to form relationships with each other in the context of these spaces. I didn't just wind up in New York City. I wanted to live here and, once I made the move, I felt even more encouraged and excited about making a case to the larger environmental community of the importance of thinking about urban environments.

Now, why "urban citizenship" over "urban identity" as a way of thinking about urban environmental questions? The 1980s and 1990s saw a flurry of interest in "identity politics," or the attempt to represent the legitimacy of the role that personal identity (especially, but not limited to, race, gender, and sexual orientation) could play in formulating a particular political, social, or even moral outlook. This framework in political and social theory often supported arguments that being in such an identity position afforded special claims to political recognition and possibly even rights.

I have grown more skeptical of the literature on identity politics over the years and have lost faith that working through it will, in the end, be the best contribution that philosophers can make to debates over questions of rights and justice in the areas to which it

is purportedly directed. My own views have gravitated back toward more traditional conceptual frameworks in political philosophy, such as civic republicanism, which puts an emphasis on more robust notions of citizenship over the arguable fragmentation represented by an emphasis on identity, and in a manner that is most likely more useful for actual debates over group interests and competing notions of justice.

In recent essays on environmental politics, such as the one you mention, I have explicitly rejected an identity-politics approach to understanding the relationship between humans and the environment, and outlined a specific critique of the limitations of that approach for making a productive contribution to the resolution of actual environmental issues. The pull of the language of identity in environmentalism continues to exert a very strong influence on the movement. Many people still seem to think that a true environmentalism is one where we come to identify ourselves as closer to the Earth than our fellow citizens. This kind of talk makes me very uncomfortable. Wouldn't it be better to envision an environmentalism that didn't require something like a religious conversion to a new way of being in the world?

But my turn away from identity politics is not unique. Various other worries surfaced about this approach by important philosophers and political and social theorists, and it is now most likely on the wane in the academy. At its most extreme, concern was raised that support for identity politics might amount to a claim that not only special rights should be accorded to some groups based on particular forms of discrimination and oppression that they had suffered, but that a unified political sphere could never grant full recognition to such groups. Arguments were made that those not in a particular identity subject position could not in principle understand the needs and concerns of those in that position, and possibly not even share in their struggles for recognition. The only recourse was a politics of fragmentation, celebration of difference for difference sake, and a turn away from the goal of equal rights, recognition, and importantly, responsibilities for everyone in a community. The result is a kind of balkanization of politics.

Just as I think the last thing we need in environmental ethics is more division and metaethical debate, I think the same is true when it comes to the larger and more important question of how we should live in our cities. If we want urbanites to think about



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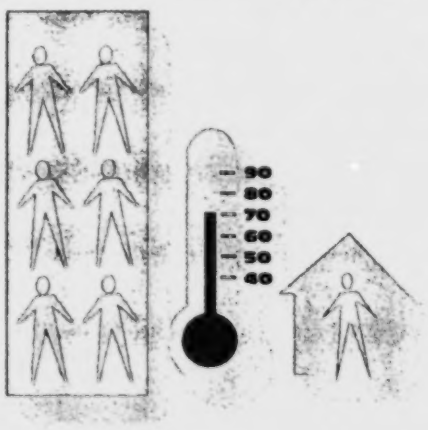
their potential environmental obligations toward each other, then I think it less likely that we will succeed through a view of environmental obligations that attaches them to a conception of environmentalism as a form of political identity. To do so makes environmentalism a kind of special interest. Instead, to see environmental responsibility as part of the more generalized notion of citizenship is to make environmental responsibility something that everyone should take part in.

**Brown:** You have pointed out the lack of work in your field on cities. Why is that?

**Light:** Simply put, much of the environmental community has, to paraphrase Frank Lloyd Wright, come to see cities as a "cancer." Cities are something that disconnects us from our native "earthen" element. But such arguments miss a crucial point: the most sustainable cities are densely populated cities, such as New York. In fact, the numbers are quite clear on this. New York City is the most sustainable city in America. We do not produce more waste per capita than any other community and we don't consume more goods or spend more money on average than other Americans. But importantly, what we do is consume less energy because most of us don't own cars and if we do own them, we drive them less often than other Americans. Most of us also share walls and so share heating costs. Such a high percentage of us live like this that we end up consuming less energy per capita than other Americans.

*"The most sustainable cities are densely populated cities, such as New York. New York City is the most sustainable city in America."*




So for New Yorkers to be environmentally responsible they don't need to think of themselves as environmentalists. I think this is very good news. If we will only get sustainability once a sufficient number of people decide to make a commitment to environmental responsibility, then we may be waiting a long time for sustainability. A focus on dense urban environments as sustainable environments could go a long way in lessening our burden on the land around us. Too many of my environmentalist colleagues see this as anathema to what they see as the proper focus of environmentalism, claiming that people living in cities are "disconnected" from nature. Perhaps. But even with this discon-



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nection they are arguably living more responsibly than their fellow citizens in the countryside.

**Brown:** As your work has evolved, it strikes me that Tom Bender, a colleague and urban historian at NYU, has been of some influence in the civic/public dimensions you explore that go beyond environmental issues. Is my impression correct?

**Light:** Yes, Tom has been a big influence. I first came to NYU as a Fellow at the International Center for Advanced Studies, which Tom directs. The theme at the center that year was "Urban Citizenship." To be quite honest, when I applied for the fellowship I didn't realize what I was getting into and just wanted the position to begin thinking about the possibility of extending environmental ethics to be inclusive of urban issues. I didn't anticipate I would turn so strongly to citizenship as a vehicle for understanding this connection. In addition to our personal conversations, especially informative for me were Tom's articles in the *Harvard Design Magazine* over the last few years.

As I mentioned before, I had been moving beyond identity frameworks for understanding a phenomena like environmentalism for a while. Tom's work only encouraged such leanings, especially as his articles in *HDM* explicitly reject identity politics in favor of citizenship. But there is more to it. I think, as with many people, that the radical politics of my youth have been waning over the years in favor of something more moderate. There are lots of reasons for this, but the turn is consistent with my desire for academics to make an actual concrete contribution to questions of public policy actually on the table, rather than always retreating into a radical discourse that may never have had much purchase in such circles, even if it was more powerful in the streets at one time.

I don't mean to sound reactionary by saying this. But I have come to reject wholesale rejections of monolithic phenomenon like "capitalism" writ large. Many of the criticisms we have waged in the academy in the past have had much purchase, but to simply sit back and label different cultural practices as complicit with such overwhelmingly strong social forces is, as I said above, to retreat into despair or ironic distance from the ways that our economic, cultural, and social institutions actually work. The same is true of "globalization," and other such culprits. These are monolithic academic constructions, which refer as much to nothing as to anything. To be sure there are constraints that are put on coun-

tries accepting IMF and World Bank assistance, which need to be criticized. But this does not mean globalization writ large, whatever it refers to, is really all that meaningful other than as a place holder for older critiques of capitalism.

Aside from this, I no longer believe we can only achieve goals like environmental sustainability through a complete rejection of capitalism, globalization, or other such phenomena. I don't think we need to reject liberalism in order to achieve a more respectful attitude toward nature. And a culture of nature, which is not a democratic culture is not something I would want to be a part of. I realize all of these propositions require arguments that I am not providing here, but in short, my attitude toward a lot of these topics has changed because the longer I stay in the academy the more frustrated I am by our fashionable positioning of ourselves as outside the mainstream.

We are no longer courting irrelevance by taking such positions. We have become irrelevant. It is up to us to fight our way back into public life and hopefully make a difference in the time we are allotted.

**Brown:** Thank you, Andrew.

# "NEW YORK, NEW YORK": COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF SEPTEMBER 11

By Maria Farland and Jennifer Santos

*This essay discusses a freshman English course, "Close Reading and Critical Writing," offered in the fall of 2001. This version of the course, titled "New York, New York," introduces freshman to basic literary analysis through a survey of the literature of New York City. The course is taught by Maria Farland, faculty of English, Fordham University, Bronx, New York; the student is Jennifer Santos, a native of the Bronx and currently a sophomore at Fordham. They reflect on the ways in which the relationship between the classroom and the community was affected by the events of September 11.*

**Santos:** On the most perfect day… on a day of cerulean skies and crisp clean air, the autumn air of *my* New York, tragedy had the nerve to knock on, knock *down*, our door — my door. My beautiful invincible city, whose strength I never questioned, the city that had endowed me with my sense of self, my self-important attitude and everything I knew … was attacked. I thought I knew everything about New York. September 11 changed everything. I wasn't so certain about what I knew anymore. My home was attacked and I felt violated. This freshman English class was no longer about showing my expertise — my knowledge of a city. It became a way to understand a cultural heritage that had been changed forever — a way to build something new out of what had been destroyed. In all my lifetime in New York, I had never visited the tops of the World Trade Center — yet I missed them, they were *mine*, after all. I, like so many native New Yorkers, took my city for granted — I treated the landmarks, the culture, the history as a backdrop, but rarely did I stop and enjoy the scene. This class became a way for me to embrace the city in a new light. I found I still had a lot to learn about my home and its cultural heritage.

**Farland:** This course, "New York, New York," invites students to consider links between New York City's institutions such as major publishing houses, printing presses, and media conglom-



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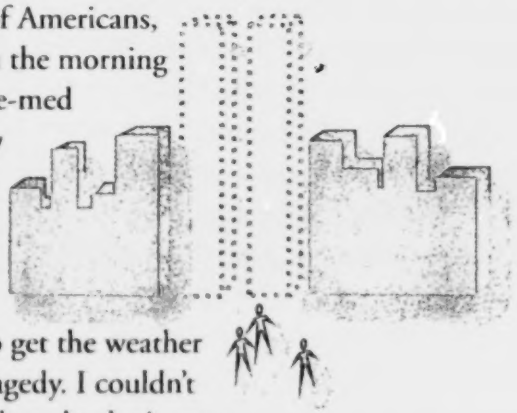
erates — the dynamics of culture and power that shape the community of the city, as well as divisions within that community. It also includes several community-based assignments, in which students visit locations related to material discussed in class.

In August of 2001, students began a study of New York City's cultural and physical monuments, tracing a survey of representations of the city across a wide range of eras and movements. Planned units of study included: 1) Immigration/migration, beginning with *The Great Gatsby* and tracing a logic of racial and cultural purity seen in *Gatsby* and the contemporary writings of the Harlem Renaissance; 2) Money and machines, which examines the logic of class difference and stratification as seen in texts as diverse as Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth,* Herman Melville's *Bartleby*, and King Vidor's *The Crowd*; 3) Urban pastoral, which invites students to look at the city as an ecological space, centering on the poetry of Whitman and the Whitmanian tradition of nature poetry that arises in the city.

When the course began, I hoped to forge a sense of shared community around the shared physical landscape and environment of the city. I hoped students would forge such connections through community-based assignments. Our focus on New York City's cultural monuments — especially its physical monuments — was dramatically transformed by the events of September 11. Two weeks into the semester, our subject matter assumed radically new cultural significance.



**Santos:** Like millions of Americans, I woke up to a nightmare on the morning of September 11. Being a pre-med student, that was the *one day* out of the week that I had a late class. All three of my roommates had early classes so I woke up alone in my dorm. I turned on the TV to get the weather and beheld immeasurable tragedy. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I thought the images might be a bad show or a sensationalistic movie illustrating yet another director's sick dream about the destruction of New York. I opened up my dorm door to find a hallway full of people in hysteria. I heard one girl screaming and others crying. That's when I knew it was no bad movie. My mom worked just blocks away

from downtown; my first response was to call her. I couldn't get through, so I just sat in front of the television mesmerized. In a state of shock, the mind wanders to the most random and inane thoughts. I started getting dressed, still thinking that class would be in session. I asked girls walking down the hall if they had heard anything about class being cancelled, but they had heard nothing. I wondered if I would be let out early. Looking back now, I think, "who cares if class was in session or not — lives were being lost," but at that time, in an advanced and ever-growing state of shock, how could I make sense of my thoughts? My mom finally called from her job but all she could tell me was she was okay. Our conversation was brief and awkward — she couldn't tell me much and I didn't know enough about the situation. When something so tragic happens, what do you do?

**Farland:** For faculty in New York City universities, the events of September 11 presented a particular challenge. My friends on the faculty at New York University, for example, awoke to watch the towers cascading down against the backdrop of their view of downtown Manhattan. Uptown at Fordham and Columbia Universities, faculty confronted the more immediate problem of New York City's unique geography. Fordham's Bronx-campus faculty exited their early morning classes to find themselves stranded, as bridges and tunnels closed down the passages to neighboring boroughs. As the day progressed, the rumors of university closings circulated alongside rumors of campus vigils and teach-ins. Many faculty scrambled to concoct last minute lesson plans and assignments whose relevance to recent events was sometimes inspired, sometimes artificial.

***Suddenly, xenophobic sentiment was very much alive.***

The relevance of "close reading" for the events of 9/11 was an ongoing issue for "New York, New York." Suddenly, xenophobic sentiment was very much alive, and the nativist rhetoric of a text like *The Great Gatsby* or the Immigration Act of 1924 — two items on our syllabus — could serve as a common reference point linking the culture of the 1920s to that of the present. Anti-Arab sentiment could serve as a living example of how domestic events shape attitudes toward immigration, and how ethnic groups become subject to wholesale scapegoating. Or, in a very different vein, celebrations of New York City's landmarks — both natural and cultural — seen in Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," would assume new meaning in a time when these landmarks were in peril. Surprisingly, the city had reopened the ferry

on September 12, and for the first time in more than a century, students could see the landscape that Whitman's poem had declared eternal features of the city. For a course dedicated to the literature of the city, the events of 9/11 would create unexpected continuities between past and present.

**Santos:** When classes resumed the following day, it seemed that nothing else was important. Biology, Chemistry — my two major classes couldn't make me forget, couldn't console me. "Faith and Critical Reasoning," my theology class (a university requirement at Fordham), was 45 minutes of chaos. Our professor tried to address the tragedy by discussing the beauty of the Islamic religion, but was only met by hurt and angered responses from my fellow students. No one wanted to comply with this form of teaching — everyone, including myself, felt that this was the last thing that should be discussed. There is always a time and a place for political correctness. But when a tragedy of this magnitude hits — who has time to be PC? It seemed inappropriate and irrelevant. Some of us were too upset to even make coherent statements. My own responses were filled with tears and quiet sobbing. The class ended, unbelievably, with everyone feeling worse than when it started.

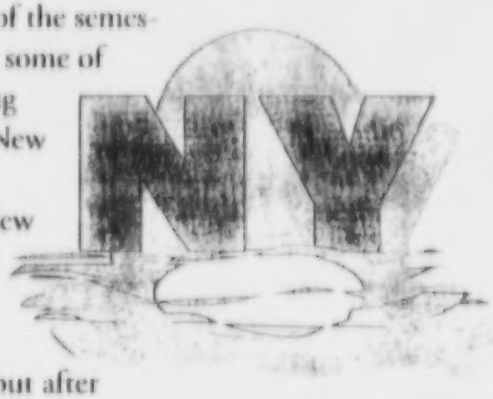
In "Close Reading and Critical Writing" however, the tension was lessened. Dr. Farland decided to address the tragedy by letting us tell of our experiences with the World Trade Center, and the city's landmarks in general. Members of the class shared their love and joy at being in a city with so many sights to see. The course became a forum for personal expression and remembrance. In the beginning of the semester, its purpose was to focus on the historical importance of New York City writers, artists, and landmarks. But with this tragedy, the course became a way for the students of the class to realize the city's personal importance in our lives. Even students from other states participated in forming a personal connection to New York City's history and culture.

**Farland:** With 9/11, even the most hardened urban dwellers, and most adventurous newcomers, took shelter from the city's imagined dangers. The events of 9/11 were exceptional, of course, but trepidations about the dangers of the urban environment are a challenge that must be confronted whenever we invite students to make connections between the classroom and the community. Less obvious, but equally important, is the challenge that community-based learning creates for political engagement. During the past

decade, scholars, politicians, and administrators have urged that community-based learning can reengage students in politics. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 gives students the chance to perform community service, with substantial congressional funding allocated to student-oriented programs. Senator Edward Kennedy argues that community service strengthens the civic "values that will keep America strong for the next generation." Once students see the needs of their community and their ability to help others, Kennedy maintains, they will feel a greater sense of community. Colin Powell agrees, touting the value of civic engagement for youth. While the value of granting academic credit for such work has been controversial, students repeatedly cite community-based learning as the most important part of their educational experience.

Community-based learning confronts students' touristic and consumerist conceptions of community and cultural heritage. Community-based learning experiences offer students a sense of greater connectedness to the social world, while fostering identity development and self-exploration. Students, however, who encounter a community frequently romanticize the community and its history. The sad events of 9/11 made such romantic conceptions of the city even more alluring; few cities are as mythologized as New York, and the tendency to romanticize the city became all the stronger.

**Santos:** At the end of the semester, we read and analyzed some of Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." A true New York patriot, Whitman describes the beauty of New York as he crosses the harbor on a ferry. The Brooklyn ferry had been closed for over 50 years, but after September 11 it was reopened to give commuters an alternative way to travel. As a class assignment, we took a trip on the Brooklyn ferry. Once again, I was amazed at the beauty of New York.




**Farland:** Celebrating the city's heritage, especially its cultural heritage, had obvious and immediate value for students in the wake of 9/11. Political scientists have argued that a sense of col-

*...a sense of cultural heritage is invaluable for political engagement.*

lective heritage is vitally important to civic and political engagement. At the same time, efforts to foster a sense of cultural heritage must be careful not to simplify or romanticize that community, or to substitute therapeutic self-awareness for a more complicated sense of the community's problems and challenges.

Nevertheless, a sense of cultural heritage is invaluable for political engagement, and in the wake of 9/11, the city's cultural past seemed like a source of pride and strength at a precarious political moment. In Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," the poet imagines that the natural and built environment seen from the ferry will link him to "others [who] will enter the gates of the ferry, and cross from shore to shore" whether "a hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence." In their trip on the Brooklyn ferry, students saw the sunset, the seagulls, and the surf, just as Whitman describes. As they rode the ferry on December 7, 2001, students were surprised and moved to hear the ferry's operators join them in a public recitation of Whitman's poem. On the bow of the ferry, students and ferry staff together recited these lines from Whitman's famous poem:

> ... What sight can ever be more stately and
> admirable to me than mast-hemm'd Manhattan,
> My river and sun-set and my scallop-edg'd
> waves of flood-tide,...

The collective poetic performance was a living instantiation of Whitman's claim that his poem would be heard by those "ever so many generations hence" who would "cross from shore to shore years hence." The temporal crossings between past and present, between finite and infinity, evoked in Whitman's poem, had assumed wholly new meaning in the wake of 9/11. The crossing between generations, and boroughs, and education levels, was surprising and instructive, and the trip concluded with ferry operators inviting students to a boroughwide meeting with the mayors to "Save the Brooklyn Ferry." (At the time, New York was changing mayors from Giuliani to Bloomberg.)

**Santos:** Because of my newfound appreciation for the city, when I subsequently found out that the ferry was going to be shut down, I decided to get involved. I wrote a letter to the mayors of New York, urging them to prevent the ferry from closing. In my letter, I urged the mayors to save the Brooklyn ferry:

Dear Mayors of New York,

Walt Whitman once said, "Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore. . . . A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them, . . ." During this past school year, my "Close Reading and Critical Writing" class at Fordham University has been studying the works of famous New York writers from the turn of the nineteenth century. When our teacher, Dr. Farland, started this theme at the end of August she had no idea of the importance of this topic, and the comfort everyone would need after the September 11 attacks. With this class, we would gain a pride and knowledge of this city that everyone (whether resident or out-of-state student) could grasp. Since the start of class, we have studied the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Edith Wharton, Langston Hughes, and many other important New York writers.

The last writer we studied was none other than Walt Whitman, who lived from 1819-1892, and was a nurse during the Civil War. Our last assignment was to take the Brooklyn ferry, which had just reopened for the first time in more than 50 years because of the September 11 attacks. During our ride on the ferry we read parts of Walt Whitman's poem "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," a beautiful poem about Walt Whitman's experience crossing the river from Manhattan to Brooklyn.

As we read this poem out loud, we realized that everything he saw had not changed. As Whitman experienced and described the "run of the flood-tide," "the heights of Brooklyn," and the "sun there half an hour high!" we experienced the sight of these things for ourselves. We saw the true beauty of this city, the inexplicable grace of this land. We saw old New York with the mark of age, but the charm of youth. We learned from just that short ride, no matter what happened around the world or what tragedy directly befell us, this city could never change and it would thrive again and again.

I cannot tell you how to profit financially from this ferry or the exact amount of customers that it would receive a day, but I can tell you if you stop this ferry from

running, you would be taking away another piece of old New York, at a time when we can't afford to lose any more. We have gained one thing from this tragedy, for a moment — just one short moment — we breathed in the air and felt peace in our hearts … all on a ferry boat heading for Brooklyn. Whitman said in his epic poem, "These and all else were to me the same as they are to you; . . . I loved well those cities; I loved well the stately and rapid river . . . Others the same — others who look back on me, because I look'd forward to them." Let us not prevent others from experiencing New York's poetry.

Sincerely,

Jennifer C. Santos

*The letter that Jennifer wrote was the stuff of every teacher's dream.*

**Farland:** The letter that Jennifer Santos wrote to save the Brooklyn ferry was, in many ways, the stuff of every teacher's dream. The lessons of the classroom had taken hold in her imagination, and the lessons of poetry became a poetic expression themselves. At the same time, the success of the assignment helped me to understand the difficulties of community-based learning. When we invite students to connect the world of the classroom with the world of the community, we frequently do so out of a concern with declining enthusiasm for political participation — the well-known phenomenon of student apathy. In the 1990s, widespread concern about students' disenchantment and disappointment with the American political process led many universities to implement programs in community-based learning. Such learning is an effective way to teach students about the larger society of which they are a part, and it is an effective way to build partnerships between universities and surrounding communities. My modest community-based assignments were an instance of this pedagogical and institutional trend.

But community-based learning must be rooted in a robust conception of civic engagement, and the capacities of ordinary citizens. Classroom-community intersections must include reflection on stakeholding, power, accountability, and special interests, as Harry Boyte has persuasively argued. Whether in full-scale service programs, or more modest assignments, community-based learning must invite students to reflect on the larger question of civic engagement, and the wider dimensions of citizenship. A rich introduction to civic and political engagement involves overcom-

ing therapeutic language currently used by many institutions. Students must begin to reflect on the ways in which political and community engagement can allow them to assume authority and agency, and to build the capacity to manage their own affairs. In Boyte's view, we must return to the conception of politics that views citizens as "historically responsible agents for the problem-solving process in society."

Community-based learning assignments must allow students to experience the messiness of the political process. When the students of "New York, New York" ventured into the community to ride Walt Whitman's "Brooklyn Ferry," the venture was a success in many ways. Inspired by their experience on the ferry, and the invitation from the ferry's operators, students trekked out to the mayors' meeting to "Save the Brooklyn Ferry." When more than 4,000 people turned out to support the ferry, most citizens, including the Fordham contingent, could only watch the meeting on TV monitors posted outside the meeting venues. Students joined fellow citizens in a frigid, three-hour wait in the 10-degree weather in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Almost two hours by subway from the Bronx, and only three days before Christmas 2001, students were denied the opportunity to participate directly in the meeting. They were literally shut out in the cold. An opportunity for firsthand political engagement became little more than a lesson in cynicism, and we left Brooklyn that night discouraged and shivering.

**Santos:** Something about my experience with this class inspired me. I felt that I was able to get involved and preserve something so historic. What amazed and inspired me was that I wasn't alone in this request. More than 4,000 New Yorkers went to a town meeting held by the mayors urging them to keep the Brooklyn ferry up and running. I was also surprised to find how much our class had bonded during the time spent in this one class. A year later, I remain close friends with about half a dozen of the students in this class. After the tragedy of September 11, "Close Reading and Critical Writing" became an outreach for my peers and me. I was a New Yorker in a class about New York City. I had thought I knew everything about the city, but this course

*...this course became a way for me to cope with a horrible tragedy.*

became a way for me to cope with a horrible tragedy. Through learning about the city's cultural history and involving myself in its current history, I was able to gain something — a piece of my community, a piece of myself back, when everyone had lost so much.

**Farland:** I began my "New York, New York" course with the modest hope of using the cultural history of the city to build a sense of community among Fordham's diverse freshman student body. The effort succeeded beyond what I had hoped, in part because the events of that fall meant that we were called to an unprecedented awareness of New York's cultural and architectural heritage. Yet the success of this effort to link the classroom to the community also brought a heightened awareness of the pitfalls of community-based learning. "Community" can be a romantic or merely therapeutic notion, and romanticizing or personalizing community does little to foster a sense of political engagement — especially engagement with the messy work of strategy, compromise, and jockeying that real politics entails. Moreover, assignments that invite students to link the lessons of the classroom, with those of the community, can be unpredictable, difficult, and jumbled. Even the promising efforts of dedicated students headed out to participate in a community meeting turned out to be a bitter disappointment, both for students and for me.

The events of 9/11 brought an unusual sense of cooperation and public purpose, and "New York, New York" was no exception. Yet while I had sought to build the course around modest versions of the community-based learning that has been touted as higher education's future, there was a sense in which the efforts to link the classroom to the community were sometimes little more than a curious blend of tourism and consumerism. Students are accustomed to seeing community through the lens of consumption and tourism, viewing a particular locale as a venue for self-actualization and self-discovery, or a romanticized encounter with the exotic, primitive other, or a more simple cultural past. Such romanticized images are indispensable to the sense of pride in cultural heritage that inspires students to get involved and to get off-campus; nevertheless, they are a real impediment to political engagement. And while earlier generations insisted that the "personal is political," it is not entirely clear that the personal connection to a community brings larger political awareness of

the skills and capacities that allow citizens to engage in politics. Moreover, when we invite students to connect the lessons of the classroom with the lessons of the community, their journeys into the world outside the campus will be unpredictable and sometimes contradictory in their implications for political education. While I began "New York, New York" with a commitment to the curricular uses of community-based learning, and the uses of the curriculum for building community within the classroom, I ended with a sense of the very real dilemmas that community entails. Even in the case of 9/11 in New York, when the value of community was indisputable and stronger than ever before, community is simultaneously elating and embittering, expedient and elusive.

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# THE ENGAGED UNIVERSITY:

## An interview with Peter Levine

*David Brown, coeditor of the* Higher Education Exchange, *asked Peter Levine, a research scholar at the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, to explore the prospects for democratic deliberation and the scholar's role in such an undertaking. Levine is the author of* The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy.

**Brown:** Peter, you have argued that "we need intellectuals who contribute something distinctive to discussion and civic action in particular places or within specific organizations." Could you develop that further here?

**Levine:** It's common to define a "public intellectual" as someone who has a large audience — someone who can speak effectively on television, for example. Academics worry that most of our tribe is too obscure and esoteric, so there's admiration (mixed, of course, with jealousy and suspicion) for those who can influence and entertain a mass audience. These famous scholars are called "public intellectuals." But talking to large groups is no way to understand their concerns, nor does it promote deliberation, since members of a national audience cannot talk to one another. So I'd like us to reclaim the term "public intellectual" as it was used by John Dewey and C. Wright Mills, meaning someone who promotes deliberation and public work. That kind of contribution is possible only when one engages over a long period with a limited number of people and their concrete needs.

I'm not saying that we should completely shun mass communications. The national media obviously play an important role in deliberative democracy — and both Dewey and Mills experimented with them in interesting ways. I'm told that Mills *died* in part from the stress of preparing for a television appearance, and Dewey labored to create national publications that would transmit academic thought to a broad public. But this was not what made him a model of a public intellectual. Dewey derived many of his ideas from his sustained interactions with particular communities (for instance, through Hull House in Chicago); he contributed

knowledge that was useful to these local groups; and then he acquired national fame because of the strength of his thought. Striving deliberately for fame — which is what it means to seek a large audience — is a dangerous temptation for anyone who wants to promote deliberation and democracy.

**Brown:** If a "public intellectual" for you is someone who promotes deliberation and public work, are there current exemplars on your campus?

**Levine:** At the University of Maryland, my unsystematic explorations have revealed many public intellectuals, and I think this would be common at most institutions. Just to name a few examples, Professor Shenglin Chang and others in the Department of Natural Resource Sciences and Landscape Architecture convene public meetings to envision possible futures for blighted neighborhoods near the university. They then use advanced software to generate images of these alternatives for the public to continue to discuss and refine. The Communications Department runs a "Recovering Democracy Forum" whose purpose "is to encourage meaningful dialogue between citizens and candidates seeking election. Thus, the democracy forums bring together a diverse range of citizens with political candidates seeking election to discuss important issues and concerns and to create empowering conversation between the public and those who offer political leadership." The Department of Criminal Justice is planning public forums on sentencing reform in the state. CIVICUS is a living-and-learning community for undergraduates who study democracy and civil society in the classroom and then design service projects. And I could easily name several more examples.

**Brown:** Who are the prime movers of these initiatives — faculty, or administration, or a public?

**Levine:** In most cases, faculty. I don't think many ideas have come from the public, which is a problem. There is a need for community organizing in the sprawling, heterogeneous areas that surround our campus. A more organized public might press for more constructive participation by the university. Community organizing is a major objective for most of the public intellectuals inside the institution.

**Brown:** How do you go about fashioning new models of public scholarship in your own work?

**Levine:** I'll give you an example. Harry Boyte (founder and codirector of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship) and Paul

Resnick (a professor of Information Science at the University of Michigan) have argued for a new kind of Extension service for the twenty-first century, one that puts the tremendous technological capacities of universities — especially land grant, state universities — to work solving community problems, but in ways that communities want — under their direction. Harry has been heavily involved in an experimental project in St. Paul, Minnesota (the St. Paul Information Commons), which recruits immigrant kids to build a sophisticated neighborhood Web site with technical support from the University of Minnesota.

We have followed, by recently establishing a Prince Georges' Information Commons in the county that surrounds the University of Maryland. This is a learning and research experience for us at the university, as well as something of a public service. Colleagues at other universities are more than welcome to join us. The result could be a new kind of Extension service, built from the ground up, on democratic principles.

Right now, we are working with high school students to create a public Web site in service to the county. The students are gathering data about "community assets" to be presented on the Web site in technically sophisticated ways via interactive digital maps. There has been an interesting dialogue between the students, who view retail chain stores as major assets, and the adult organizers, who start with a list of assets that includes nonprofits and idiosyncratic, locally owned businesses. There has been a lot of learning on both sides.

***"I'm not sure that there is a clean distinction between advocacy and deliberation."***

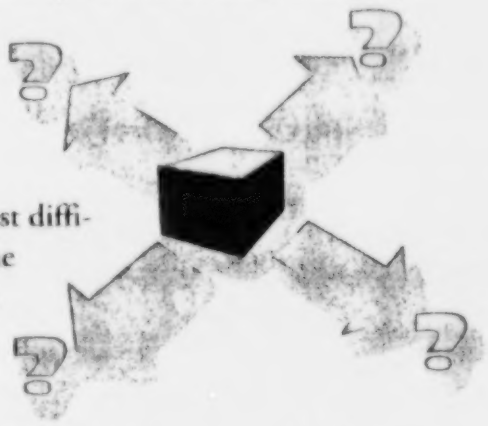
**Brown:** So the "learning" led to a broader definition of "community assets"? With what consequences?

**Levine:** We're just getting started, so I can't point to many tangible consequences. But I have already been forced to explain (at least to myself) why I think that a whole-food co-op is an asset but a fast-food chain restaurant isn't. This is not self-evident to the kids, and it's good for me to have to think about my own values.

**Brown:** Some would argue that public advocacy, rather than public deliberation, seems to be the stance of many academics in their interactions with various publics. Their students are also prepared to assume the advocate role. Do you agree and, if so, what does such a stance say about the capacities of those publics and the nature of their participation in democratic life?

**Levine:** "I'm not sure that there is a clean distinction

between advocacy and deliberation." What does someone do when she deliberates, if not to advocate some position? We do want deliberators to listen as well as speak, and I suppose that some professors don't value, practice, or teach listening skills as well as they should. Also, academics could set a conscious goal of promoting deliberation by various groups both inside and outside the university. But I think it would be a distortion of the university's role if *most* professors became deliberation promoters, rather than proponents of their own views and positions.



Increasingly, I fear that public deliberation is a black box, a mysterious process to which we are supposed to entrust difficult normative issues because the deliberating public is sovereign. But what do citizen deliberators do once they face an issue? They propose and assess specific proposals and values. So coming out and saying what you think of an issue is not an alternative to deliberation; it is an example of it.

The political debate is too narrow (and too dominated by money), so there is a need for academics to participate. Think how much narrower our public discourse would be if all the people with college teaching jobs disappeared from television, radio, and the op-ed page. So I think we need advocates — even a few ideological pit bulls who happen to be college professors.

**Brown:** Isn't the problem of advocacy that it assumes a somewhat settled mind rather than one that remains open with all that implies?

**Levine:** That's a good point. I have worked with formal advocacy groups and noticed that their minds are very settled — partly because they occupy specific ideological niches, partly because there's no time to think about fundamental issues when one is involved in a constant political battle, and partly because nuanced or shifting positions are hard to communicate through the mass media. I don't think that engaged professors are typically *as fixed* in their views as professional advocates are. But I agree that we should aim for open-mindedness and listening skills.

**Brown:** I remember one of your comments at a workshop to the effect that "scholars aren't that different" from citizens. Just

what did you mean?

**Levine:** I'm concerned about a type of rhetoric or analysis that distinguishes academics and experts from "real people," "ordinary Americans," "citizens," or "the public." In a complex, postindustrial society, most people are sometimes experts, yet the same people are often ordinary citizens. Like everyone else, academics are baffled by complex issues that are outside their field; they are mostly focused on private affairs, not public life; and they feel both powerless and economically insecure. Therefore, I don't think that professors differ from citizens systematically in their attitudes or behaviors.

Furthermore, making such a distinction can have perverse results. First of all, it can imply that professors should not directly say what they think about issues, because it is "the public's" job to deliberate. But if professors are part of the public, then their civic duty is to wade into the fray and defend their opinions publicly. Second, I think that the distinction between experts and citizens is always implicitly elitist, even though it can be offered with a populist intent. It implies that professors would fundamentally change a public debate if they were to join it. In my experience, this is not often the case. Third, I don't think it's very good politics to tell academics that they are not part of the public and that if they intervene, they may distort or suppress the public voice. This will produce a guilty silence, at best.

***"...measuring the quality of deliberation is impossible."***

**Brown:** But academics are specially trained to use reason, critical reason. If they practice reason as teachers/educators, why shouldn't that role, that practice, be employed in public spaces? Why do they just become like everyone else?

**Levine:** Before, I was resisting the idea that professors are especially bad for public debate because they are arrogant and imposing. Now you're suggesting that they may be (or at least ought to be) especially good for deliberation, because of their reasoning skills. Actually, I wouldn't be surprised to find that, on average, academics do deliberate more and better than other citizens. We'll never know, since measuring the quality of deliberation is impossible. But I wouldn't expect academics to be a huge help, because there are no experts on moral questions.

**Brown:** Don't academics often shun debate in "local publics," instead preferring the relatively closed conversation with colleagues? Are many of them willing to be pragmatists allowing the interests of those publics to help determine the problems they

should address in their academic work and peer review?

**Levine:** You're right; it is not very common for professors to engage in serious dialogue with local citizens about the direction their own research should take. In some cases, this is because they overlook what their neighbors and fellow citizens have to offer; they do not show proper respect for the people who pay their salaries. To some extent, it is because of incentives and rules that are beyond their control. For example, you can't get tenure for deliberating with your neighbors. And it is extremely unwise to do work that is not currently valued in your own professional disciplinary association, if you want to get a college teaching job.

But there is also a deeper question here about which topics "local publics" should help to understand. Are you implying that a scholar of Renaissance painting should allow the interests of a local public to determine the problems that she addresses in her own work? Why? Even if her neighbors *could* get up to speed on her subject and give her good advice, it is much more efficient for her to consult her fellow members of the College Art Association. If your view is that we shouldn't employ scholars of Renaissance painting at all — because their subject is of little value to a deliberating public — then you are more of an American pragmatist than I.

Since much of academic research does not have a direct or obvious link to deliberation, I wouldn't ask most professors to consult with local publics about the direction of their work. I would ask them to be good citizens when they are not doing their research, and to explain their work to anyone who wants to understand it, but not to deliberate about how to proceed as scholars.

Thus, my complaint is only against academics in fields of direct practical significance for local publics. *They* should take direction from their fellow citizens. Yet often they act in undemocratic and nondeliberative ways. For instance, a lot of professional economic advice is presented as if it were based on scientific certainty, when, in fact, economic issues always involve moral choices that economics cannot answer.

Still, the arrogance of economics is not a feature of academic life. There are nonacademic economists (consider Alan Greenspan); and there are academics who know nothing about economics. I even suspect that those economists who teach in universities are more aware of their discipline's limitations than those who work in the government or the private sector.

Thus, at the very least, I would plead for a more nuanced, fine-grained comparison of academics to average citizens. Instead of throwing all professors together into a single category (and throwing them out with the bathwater), I would draw distinctions by discipline, by type of institution and career path, even by age and generation. It may be that some academics have implicitly antidemocratic or antideliberative tendencies, but surely not all of them.

*"...some academics have implicitly antidemocratic or antideliberative tendencies."*

**Brown:** What are some of those distinctions?

**Levine:** This is really a call to research — I don't have the answers. But I would suspect that there is a "democracy deficit" in many of the disciplines that apply quantitative social-science methods to train and advise practical professionals. (These fields range from accounting to urban studies.) Such methods appear to give answers to public problems, but they cannot address fundamental normative issues, which tend to get suppressed. I think the misuse of social science is less widespread in the core disciplines, where more scholars understand the limits of their methods, than in the applied fields.

Meanwhile, I think that in some of the arts and humanities, many intellectuals who see themselves as politically engaged have adopted such an adversarial stance toward mainstream American culture and institutions that they have cut themselves off from public debate. This might be an example of a generational phenomenon, since I think it applies most to scholars who attended graduate school in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Brown:** On another front, you have expressed your concern about the public accountability of universities, describing them as "economic and political powerhouses." Could you explain why their "research, technology, and institutional management" should be "areas of concern for those who believe in the democratic purposes of higher education?"

**Levine:** This was mainly a response to the proposal that, the *Higher Education Exchange (HEE)* should be devoted to making college-level pedagogy more democratic. We academics are strategically placed members of powerful institutions. Therefore, we're missing the main action if we teach our students to be good democratic citizens, but ignore the massive impact of our own institutions on local (and international) economics. Just one example of the type of issue that *HEE* should examine is the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which allowed universities to sell or

license patents to technologies that were developed in their laboratories using federal funds. This has become a multibillion-dollar source of revenue that has enriched and expanded higher education, but it has also shifted our universities' priorities. Why develop a solution to a local agricultural problem in partnership with neighboring farmers if a college lab can bring in thousands of times more money by developing a product for a global market?

**Brown:** That's a very useful example. Are there others? If academics are strategically placed members of powerful institutions, should they be the prime movers to change the status quo?

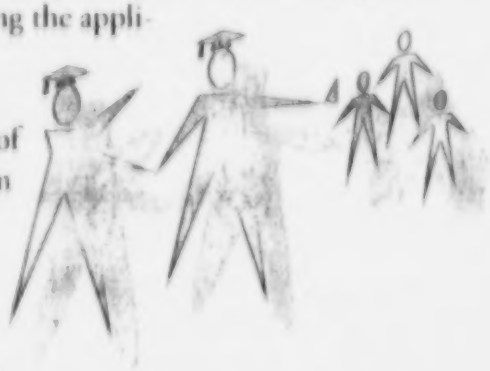
**Levine:** There are many other questions to ask about universities' behavior as economic and political institutions. For example, whom should we admit as students? What professional activities should we encourage and reward through hiring and promotion decisions? To whom should research results belong — the researchers, the university, the funder, or the whole public?

I don't know if senior faculty should be the prime movers, but they have the advantages of job security, status, and insider knowledge about how their institutions work. Probably a partnership between senior faculty and outsiders would make the most difference. Outsiders include stakeholders such as members of the state legislature — but also the broad public.

***"To whom should research results belong — the researchers, the university, the funder, or the whole public?"***

**Brown:** Let me ask you the question you just posed. What professional activities do you think faculty should encourage and reward in their hiring and promotion decisions that do not currently get enough attention?

**Levine:** There is pretty widespread pressure for faculty to be rewarded for "service," meaning the application of standard research techniques to current public issues, and the dissemination of accessible, topical findings. I'm not against this, although I think we have to be careful not to squeeze out other voices when we apply expert knowledge. Also, this kind of research is rarely on the cutting-edge methodologically or theoretically, so doing a lot of it may lower academic standards. Finally, I believe that service is often already sufficiently rewarded, if not for junior faculty, at least for senior professors who get fame and



recognition as a result.

Thus I would press for us to reward a different kind of engagement. I have in mind work that really is at the cutting edge of a discipline's progress, but that involves innovative, interesting, and mutually respectful collaborations with communities. Think, for example, of Elinor Ostrom's very creative work on the management of "common-pool resources." Her work draws from the traditions and special knowledge of existing communities; it influences the debate among highly sophisticated social theorists; and it is valuable for citizens who want to know how to build new institutions of their own. There is no tradeoff between academic rigor and civic engagement in Ostrom's work.

*"...the tenure process, as it is currently organized, discourages civic engagement."*

Incidentally, I have never been on a tenure track, and I'm grateful for that. Almost all of my work has been too eccentric — and too "applied" — to count toward tenure in a standard philosophy department. I'm in a foundation-supported institute that *must* stay involved with current public issues and make its work useful to people outside the academy. I'm not suggesting that we should abolish tenure and force all academics to support themselves with grant proposals. But my personal experience makes me think that the tenure process, as it is currently organized, discourages civic engagement — at least among professors at the beginnings of their careers.

**Brown:** Could you say more about the merits of deliberation itself as a form of civic engagement? You referred to public deliberation in your paper "The Internet and Civil Society" as something of a "black box." On the one hand, you have said that "deliberation is the most democratic way to improve citizens' views, since individuals are forced to defend their proposals in the face of those with different interests, backgrounds, and information. As a consequence, overtly selfish or foolish ideas tend to drop out." On the other hand, you have said that you are uncertain about deliberation's purposes, limits, value, and structure. Could you say more about that?

**Levine:** There are interesting debates about some issues on which I have not made up my own mind. For example, how much and what kind of equality is needed to make deliberation legitimate? I think it's patronizing and empirically false to assert that poor or poorly educated people can't function in a deliberative setting. On the other hand, massive inequality can certainly distort a deliberative exercise.

Another question: Do we always want official deliberative

bodies (such as Congress) to make decisions on the basis of publicly articulated principles and reasons? Or is it sometimes actually desirable to use nondeliberative methods, such as logrolling, vote swapping, and side payments?

A third question: Should we always seek common ground with our opponents and treat them with respect, or is it sometimes appropriate to try to drive a wedge between our friends and enemies? (Here I think of the civil rights movement, which chose obdurate segregationists as targets for civil disobedience, because the "moderate" ones could muddy the rhetorical waters by deliberating.)

Finally, when is deliberation safe? When Slobodan Milosevic started persuading Serbs that they were fundamentally different from the Muslims in their midst (whom he called "Turks"); that they were oppressed; that they ought to seek revenge for a medieval military defeat; and that violent means were noble, he was giving his fellow citizens reasons to change their views about their identity, goals, and means. If this was "deliberation," then what's so great about it? And if it wasn't deliberation, why wasn't it? Cases like this are extremely common, and they make one wonder whether sheer self-interested negotiation isn't generally safer than "deliberation."

**Brown:** Let's pursue your point about nondeliberative methods, self-interested negotiation including "logrolling" and "side payments," what some think of as politics as usual. What policy contexts do you think are better served, better resolved by such means?

***"...sometimes it is better to deal than to deliberate."***

**Levine:** Representatives of disadvantaged groups can often get more for their own members if they negotiate and split the difference with their opponents, rather than criticize the moral underpinning of a policy that they don't like. Moral criticism is the essence of deliberation, but sometimes it is better to deal than to deliberate. Gutmann and Thompson in *Democracy and Disagreement* cite the example of unions that opposed NAFTA so strongly on the merits that they could not trade support for the treaty in return for anything else. Yet, arguably, union members would have been better off if they had received a large "side payment" (such as federal job-retraining money) in return for NAFTA. The way things turned out, they lost the debate, they lost the vote, and they got no compensation.

**Brown:** Coming back to your look at "The Internet and Civil

Society" you noted that there is "exit" instead of "voice" on the Web — "since leaving any Internet-based group is easy but changing its prevailing norms is difficult. The likely result is a decrease in public deliberation — especially about ends and values." Does the Internet qualify as a place for deliberation?

**Levine:** There is obviously a massive amount of deliberation on the Internet. But uses of this medium vary enormously, from e-mail exchanges among old friends (which may be much like traditional letters), to on-line newspapers, to chat rooms, to carefully constructed deliberative environments such as "Unchat" (see www.bodieselectric.com). In my view, there are two especially interesting and unresolved questions about the relationship between the Internet and deliberation: One is that search engines and other technological tools give us an unprecedented power to find specific ideas and information tailored to our own interests. These tools are great resources for deliberators, who can check their facts before they speak and efficiently seek alternative perspectives. At the same time, it is increasingly easy to avoid the discomfort and cognitive dissonance that may arise when one encounters unwelcome views and facts. Thanks to search engines, if I need political information, I no longer have to buy a newspaper (with its diverse array of perspectives and often dismaying news about other people's lives); instead, I can search the Web for just the facts I *want*. Andrew Shapiro, Andrew Chin, Cass Sunstein, and others believe that deliberation is suffering as a result of the new efficiency of searching. Many other observers believe that this empirical conclusion is wrong. I would note that search engines can be used either to broaden one's mind or to screen out uncomfortable ideas. Thus, what matters is not so much the technology, but the commitment of today's Americans to seek out alternative views and diverse discussions. The general decline of interest in public affairs — and the shrinking membership in community associations — leads me to worry about how the Internet will be used.

Secondly, much on-line communication is with people whom we also know well, off-line. But the Internet adds a new option that was previously too expensive to be popular: anonymous (or pseudonymous) communication with strangers. Anonymity can encourage candor, especially about things like social stigmas; and that is good for deliberation. But anonymity may also discourage serious, ongoing discussion of shared issues — especially discussion that is linked to collective action.

**Brown:** Thank you, Peter.

# STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING THE FACULTY IN CIVIC RENEWAL

By Barry Checkoway

Civic engagement is essential to a democratic society and higher education has a special responsibility for its renewal. Faculty members, especially, are strategically situated for renewing the civic mission of higher education, yet today's faculty are not very civic. They are resourceful researchers, productive contributors to scientific knowledge, and influential members of their academic disciplines and professional fields. They include master teachers and trainers, competent consultants, and technical assistance providers. But they do not view their work as civic, although they may yearn for a civic expression that has been frustrated by their training and conditioning.

What are some strategies for involving the faculty in the civic renewal of the American university? This question is important because, without the faculty, nothing lasting is likely to happen. After all, faculty manage the curricula, teach the courses, and work with students. The university began with its first faculty member, and the faculty-student relationship is its original relationship. Things happen in universities without faculty, but nothing lasting will happen without them, including civic renewal.

A strategy for involving the faculty would include an affirmation of the civic mission and identification of issues that have salience. It would include changing the dominant culture of the institution, reconceiving research and teaching as forms of civic scholarship, and redefining faculty roles and rewards. It would involve faculty in research that involves and develops communities, in learning and teaching that prepares students for civic participation, and in building collaborative partnerships for sustaining the effort over time.

It is as possible for me to imagine a university where faculty members are actively involved in civic renewal as it is for me to imagine their serving as civic role models for students and drawing on their expertise for the civic welfare of a diverse democracy. The university is a special institution with faculty members already

accomplishing tasks that seem more complex than these.

My focus here is on strategies for involving the faculty in civic renewal. The following are not the only strategies, but they are among the important ones.

## Changing the Culture

Basic to involving the faculty in civic renewal is a belief that it is desirable and possible to do so. But this belief runs contrary to the dominant academic culture (Damrosch, 1995; Platt, 1998).

Some faculty have a strong sense of civic purpose, feel that their actions will have consequences, and organize their work around their vision. They are few in numbers, willing to take risks, and sometimes can create changes.

However, most faculty do not perceive themselves or their professional roles in this way. Instead, they are conditioned to believe that the civic competencies of students and the problems of society are not central to their role in the university. They view themselves as teachers and researchers with commitments to their academic disciplines or professional fields, but this does not necessarily translate into playing public roles in an engaged university or democratic society.

Faculty perceptions are shaped by an academic culture that runs contrary to civic work. Most faculty are trained in graduate schools where required courses ignore civic content, and they enter academic careers where gatekeepers dissuade them from spending time in the community. They are socialized into a culture where institutional structures shape their beliefs and cause behaviors that are consistent with their conditioning. They perceive that civic engagement is not central to their role, and that it may even jeopardize their careers in the university. This is what many faculty believe, this is their dominant culture, and any change is an enormous undertaking.

There is little empirical evidence to substantiate these beliefs. On the contrary, studies show that faculty members who consult with community agencies are more likely to have funded research projects, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and positive student evaluations of their teaching, than those who do not. When people hold beliefs that are contrary to the facts, a cultural problem exists (Patton & Marver, 1979).

When it comes to civic renewal, most faculty are more neutral in their orientation. They sense that civic renewal is a valid idea but do not feel very strongly about it. They might be willing

to attend a meeting, or serve on a committee, or even incorporate civic content into their work if there were sufficient information and incentive to do so. They are candidates for cultural change, and if only a fraction of them changed their orientation, the outcomes would be extraordinary.

There are sound strategic reasons for thinking of most faculty as neutral in their orientation. If you think of a potential constituency as relatively neutral, mildly supportive, or ready for change, rather than strongly for or against, it will affect the strategy that is employed, and broaden the potential base of support.

What would it take to create cultural change? It would take senior leaders who express strong civic values, challenge the current beliefs, and praise new civic accomplishments. It would require policies and structures, administrative mandates, leadership development, management training, cultural change agents, awareness campaigns, assessments and audits, continuous education, campuswide coalitions, and recognitions and rewards. Cultural change is usually a slow process, but it happens all the time.

It is difficult to conceive of cultural changes in institutions where participants are so strongly conditioned and have such deep investments in the status quo, and who hold beliefs so deeply rooted in their own professionalization. But if the world can experience the paradigm shifts attributable to Ptolemy and Copernicus, is it unreasonable to expect changes at Harvard and Stanford?

## Reconceiving Research as Civic Scholarship

Civic scholarship is work that draws on one's academic discipline or professional expertise for the welfare of civil society. Any strategy for involving the faculty must recognize the civic purpose of scholarship and the reconception of research.

Faculty members are ideally positioned for civic scholarship, but universities are frequently narrow in their approach to it. The prevailing paradigm places emphasis on the quest for new knowledge in accordance with positivist scientific principles. Researchers are "detached" workers who define problems in "dispassionate" ways on conceptual or methodological grounds and gather data on "human subjects" through "value free" methods that assure reliability of the findings. They share their results with professional peers through presentations at scientific meetings and publications in scholarly journals whose editors have the same orientation. They receive rewards based on evaluation of research and publication in accordance with scholarly standards of the academy, not for its civic outcomes.

*In a new paradigm, researchers would involve the community in the research process.*

Reconceptualizing research would broaden the prevailing paradigm to include "the welfare of civil society" as a primary purpose in knowledge development. In a new paradigm, researchers would involve the community in the research process, from problem definition to data collection to discussion and utilization of the findings. They would regard community members as research partners and active participants in knowledge creation, rather than as human subjects and passive recipients of information. They would collaborate with their civic partners, promote a co-learning and empowering process, and involve them in "democratizing research and researching for democracy" (Ansley & Gaventa, 1997; Israel, et al. 1998; Nyden, et al. 1997).

Reconceived in this way, civic scholarship would have benefits for the individual, the institution, and the larger society. It would provide faculty members with new life experiences, cause them to interact with people who are different from themselves, and stimulate new thinking for research and teaching. It is possible to imagine a university that conceives of research as a form of civic scholarship, although such an idea is difficult for those deeply invested in the status quo.

## Education for Democracy

Faculty members are in a position to prepare students for democratic participation.

For example, they can involve students as partners in research projects that address important issues in society. They can involve students in for-credit courses in which they participate in the community and, as a result, gain substantive, practical skills, and a sense of social responsibility. They can collaborate with students in cocurricular activities that have a strong civic purpose and might become among their most-intense learning experiences in the institution.

These educational opportunities are available in most universities. More and more students participate in student-faculty research programs, enroll in community service-learning courses, and serve in communities through cocurricular activities during

breaks in the academic calendar or during the summer months.

Students can learn a great deal from these types of courses and cocurricular activities — although the learning is not automatic — and benefit from educational support structures that prepare them for entering the community and for critical reflection on the experience. Such structures are not available at most institutions at the present time.

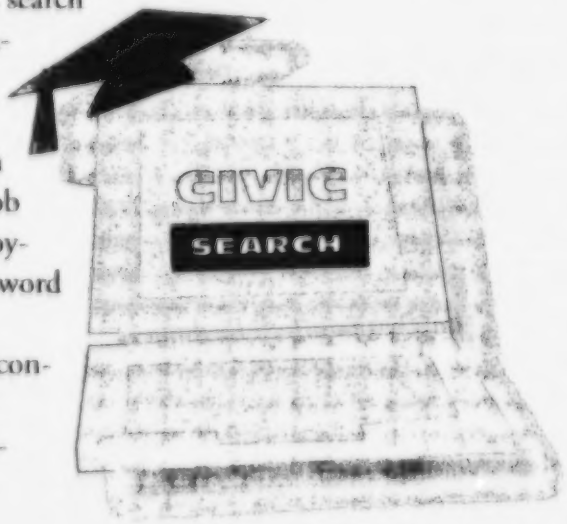
But even if more faculty involved more students as partners in research projects, or enrolled more students in community learning, or advised more students in cocurricular activities, would it address the root causes of the current disengagement? Students have many opportunities already, but their interest in public participation remains low, nonetheless.

## Redefining Faculty Roles

Faculty members can play various civic roles within the university. For example, they can conduct research on real-world civic problems, provide professional training for civic practice, or consult with civic agencies. They can integrate civic information and make it more understandable, or they can articulate their own positions and become reformers in society.

Civic roles for faculty members are not new. Indeed, they were standard for the founders of some academic disciplines whose descendants comprise the academy today, including the first sociology, political science, and economics instructors who viewed themselves as social reformers, and social work, public health, and urban planning faculty who worked together with community collaborators in low-income areas of large industrial cities (Schacter, 1998; Snyder, 2000; Westbrook, 1991).

However, these faculty roles contrast sharply with contemporary ones. Today's universities search for provosts to administer academic affairs, deans to raise external funds, and faculty to conduct research and teach courses. A review of faculty job descriptions in a major employment listing did not find the word "civic" mentioned *even once*.




These earlier civic roles contrast with the now familiar categories of "professional ser-

*...to characterize campus citizenship as civic engagement does an injustice to the word.*

vice" (through participation in professional associations) and "university service" (through membership on campus committees) through which faculty now serve. Membership on campus committees and maintenance of professional associations are activities in their own right, but do not necessarily comprise contributions to civil society. They are often interpreted as an expression of good citizenship in the institution, but are not necessarily identifiable as civic roles in a democratic society. "Campus citizenship" is a responsibility of membership in the academy, and should be rewarded as part of the workload; but to characterize campus citizenship as civic engagement does an injustice to the word (Checkoway, 1997).

Is it possible that campus citizenship might actually reduce civic engagement? When faculty members devote their lives to the creation of knowledge and its publication in scholarly journals, they have less discretionary time to spend outside the academy. When they focus only on specialized scholarly studies for a small circle of professional peers, they run the risk of increasing their own social isolation and producing work that lacks immediate impact or public relevance. When they become isolated from others, they may reduce their own civic engagement, further withdraw from participation in the community, and become alienated from the rest of the world.

A strategy for faculty role redefinition would start with instructors who model civic behavior to students as undergraduates, mentor them in graduate school, and support them through their academic careers. It would sensitize students cum faculty to the intellectual integrity and educational benefits of civic work, include a serious cultural campaign in their discipline and department, and reward them for their activities and accomplishments. Role redefinition is not inconceivable; roles are always changing and will continue to do so.

Eugene Rice (1996) has written about a "new American scholar" who shows a sense of responsibility for public life and the quality of democratic participation. However, he argues that the "professionalization of scholarly allegiance" and its "institutionalization in higher education" caused professors to turn inward on themselves, develop knowledge for its own sake rather than its societal benefit, adopt research methodologies and positivist paradigms shaped by scientific neutrality, and focus more on their departments and disciplines than on their communities and soci-

ety. When departments and disciplines, rather than society, become the focus of scholarly allegiance and political power, it reduces its civic benefit.

What is the public work of the professorate? This provocative question makes many assumptions that challenge current conceptions, and its asking has great potential for awakening faculty to reconsider their civic roles (Boyte, 1998; Boyte & Kari, 1996, 1998).

## Modifying the Reward Structure

When faculty draw on their academic discipline or professional expertise for the benefit of society in accordance with the university's civic mission, they should be rewarded. Work that draws on one's academic discipline is a legitimate part of the academic enterprise. When professors engage in this work, they should be rewarded. Thus any strategy for involving the faculty will require modifying the reward structure, including promotion and tenure, time for one's own professional priorities, salary increases, prestige, and other rewards. To do otherwise is dysfunctional for the individual and the institution.

Tenure today rewards individual initiative and personal performance, not collective action or civic behavior, but this was not always the case (Hiley, 1997). According to William Plater (1998, 1999), nineteenth-century tenure was an expression of moral responsibility characterized by commitment to an institutional mission serving a greater civic purpose or social good. Twentieth-century tenure has emerged as an "individual right" protected by "academic freedom." Several societal or external forces are causing changes that will require new forms of tenure in the future.

*In my entire academic career, I have rarely been held accountable for my civic performance.*

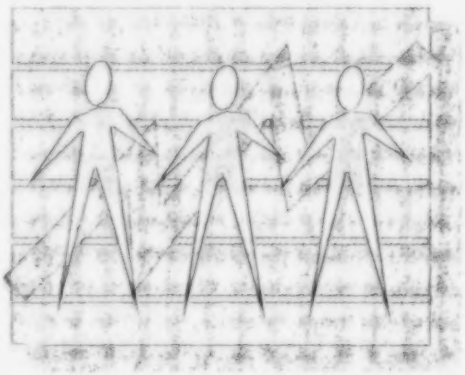
The present reward structure at many universities still places emphasis on research for its own sake, recognizes faculty for publications in scholarly journals, and rewards them for the creation of new knowledge, not for its civic outcomes. In my entire academic career, I have rarely been held accountable for or ever asked about my civic performance. On the contrary, I have been informed by sympathetic deans and department heads that civic involvement might actually jeopardize a career in the academy. These deans and department heads cared a great deal about me, wanted me to succeed, and believed that time given to civic work would divert me from the real work of the institution.

Thus, it is no surprise that faculty often conduct research on

problems defined by their departments and disciplines, teach courses in their proscribed curricula, and believe that civic work has low regard or few rewards. These beliefs are reinforced by their professional peers, by their disciplinary associations, and by the editors of the journals in which they are expected to publish. They tend to respond to the rewards they receive, and these rewards do not recognize their civic performance.

Reward structures require evaluation systems and, like other faculty work, civic scholarship should be documented and evaluated in systematic ways according to appropriate criteria, including judgments of its impacts on knowledge development, teaching and training, and service to society. Evidence should include dissemination through professional or popular publications, and evaluations by professional peers, community clients, agency users, and other external reviewers. Excellent guidelines are available for evaluation of civic scholarship, but most university officials are unaware of them (Michigan State, 1993).

The reward structure includes more than promotion and tenure. It also includes faculty prestige, which is especially important in institutions where relationships are hierarchical and academic units are judged by their place in the national rankings. Presidents, provosts, and deans have many methods to afford prestige for civic work, if they choose to do so.



The reward structure also includes social support. Many faculty members feel isolated from their universities, and unable to influence the institutional decisions that affect them. Methods as simple as brown-bag lunches, afternoon coffees, and evening dinners can give faculty that intangible something for which they are searching but are unable to find elsewhere on the campus. Social support is not usually considered part of the reward structure, but faculty members who receive it find it greatly rewarding.

The reward structure needs modification, but the limitations of the present structure should neither justify individual inaction nor keep faculty from quality service in the interim. Faculty do many things for which there are few rewards, and there are substantial rewards for work that lies outside the formal structure.

The reward structure is an important instrument, but it is not always enough to alter behavior, and some individuals will do civic work without support.

Should faculty expect remuneration for their civic work? Faculty should be rewarded for work that draws on their academic discipline as a normal expectation of their role in the university. But it somehow seems problematic for individuals to expect remuneration for civic work that derives from their role in a democratic society. Work that draws on their discipline should be rewarded, but citizen participation in a democratic society is still a civic responsibility regardless of its monetary reward.

## Building Internal Support

Any strategy for involving the faculty operates in a field of forces that facilitates or limits its progress. Even excellent ideas are no assurance of success, if support is not built by identifying the people who can influence implementation, establish relationships with them, and sensitize them to the issues. Following are some of these people.

*President.* The president is ideally positioned for influencing the faculty. As the top executive officer, he or she communicates regularly with vice presidents, deans, department heads, faculty members, students, alumni, regents, and other stakeholders. Faculty members expect the president to take responsibility for leading the institution, and a presidential pronouncement can have influence (Alpert, 1985).

***...presidents have little left for public life.***

However, most presidents do not view themselves as civic leaders or spokespersons on public issues. According to Father Theodore Hesburgh (2001), universities have become so complex and bureaucratic, and require so much time for administration and fund-raising, that presidents have little left for public life. He concludes: "We cannot urge students to have the courage to speak out unless we are willing to do so ourselves."

*Vice Presidents.* Although they vary in their levels of authority and ability to influence the faculty, any vice president can step forward on civic renewal. For example, both the vice president for academic affairs and the provost come from the faculty ranks and have great potential for influence. They oversee academic policies, strategic planning, promotion and tenure, and budgetary decisions. When the chief academic officer speaks, faculty members usually listen.

The vice president for student affairs provides services for stu-

dent development outside the classroom, including cocurricular activities and community service; and the vice president for external affairs has responsibility for building relationships outside the university, including relationships with public officials and civic leaders. Both of these nonacademic vice presidents perform essential functions with students and communities, without which the faculty would be unable to function effectively in their educational roles. But because they are not always faculty members, they may be limited in their influence with the faculty.

*Deans and Department Heads.* Even the most strongly committed presidents, provosts, and executive officers depend on deans and department heads who work directly with faculty members in institutional implementation. These officials have responsibility for curricular requirements, personnel appointments, and workload decisions that affect the faculty. They themselves are faculty members who have academic credentials, and have common cause with their faculty colleagues in advancing the educational mission of the institution.

*...if only a few made a serious commitment to civic renewal, their efforts could be significant.*

However, deans and department heads are absorbed in advancing their individual units, defending their budgets, and raising external funds for program development. They may care about civic renewal and other interdisciplinary themes, but have too little time of their own for campuswide campaigns. They may care about faculty citizenship but usually define it as institutional service such as serving on a campus committee rather than playing a serious role in a civic reform movement. They are instrumental in their roles and relationships with faculty members, but uneven in their own commitment to civic renewal. Yet if only a few of them made a serious commitment to civic renewal, their efforts could be significant.

*Students.* Students have more potential than they realize for involving the faculty in civic renewal. History shows that when students unite in solidarity, educational institutions often respond. If students were to meet with the president, provost, deans, department heads, and faculty members, and express their wishes for civic content, it would build the base for civic renewal.

However, this is not likely to happen in the present environment. For although students serve communities in large numbers, this does not necessarily translate into civic engagement. Student interest in community service does not increase the demand for civic content in the curriculum. Student demand has the potential

to influence the faculty, but the connection between community service and civic engagement, and the demand for civic curricular content, is not usual.

## Using Faculty Tactics

Strategy can involve a series of tactics or planned activities in sequence, each one building on the success of the one before. Each tactic should be salient to the particular constituency, and enable them to take actions within their experience.

Despite differences in institutions, some tactics are familiar to faculty members and worthy of consideration, including:

- Organizing a series of distinguished lectures addressing important civic issues at the highest level of discourse;
- Holding meetings that enable faculty to learn from one another and build mutual support for community learning and civic education;
- Conducting seminars and workshops on research and teaching methods that integrate civic content and make faculty more effective;
- Making grants to faculty members with innovative ideas for institutional initiatives that advance the civic mission;
- Identifying outstanding faculty members and providing them with release time for civic curricular development;
- Encouraging faculty members to participate as mentors or advisers to students in independent studies or cocurricular activities with a civic purpose;
- Providing consultation and technical assistance to individual faculty members on their community research and civic learning concerns;
- Publishing and disseminating papers written by the ablest available faculty on subjects that complement the civic objectives; and
- Advocating for an administrative structure, funding level, and reward structure that promotes faculty involvement.

There is nothing unique about activities of this type, and most faculty will find them relatively routine. Good!

Yet, when I discuss these things with my faculty colleagues, some of them concur, whereas others think that I am seeing things that are not there, for which they usually humor me before returning to their roles as productive researchers and master teachers who lack a civic purpose because of conditioning despite their unful-

filled civic yearning. If only a few of them gave expression to their yearning, they could contribute to the civic renewal of both the university and also the civil society from which too many citizens have withdrawn. If only a few more of them became more civic, the effects could be extraordinary.

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# DEMOCRACY'S UNIVERSITIES:

## An interview with Scott Peters

*David Brown, coeditor of the* Higher Education Exchange, *wanted to know more about the work of Scott Peters at Cornell University in land grant education and what he is learning as part of the Public Scholarship Project Team.*

**Brown:** In a recent workshop at the Kettering Foundation, the participants thought that the question of whether scholars and their institutions have lost their "democratic identity" needed more attention. I know that you have raised this very issue in seeking to revive the democratic identity of our land grant institutions.

**Peters:** The democratic identity issue, which in my mind is closely tied to the broad question of higher education's civic mission and work, has an especially deep relevance in the land grant system. This is a system that is composed of institutions that have historically been referred to as "people's colleges." The title of the only scholarly book that provides an account of the land grant idea in its formative years back in the mid-1800s reflects just how central democratic identity was to these institutions. The book is titled, *Democracy's College* (Earle D. Ross, 1942, Iowa State College Press).

While there's a strong history of democratic identity and work in the land grant system, I do think it's fair to say that it's drastically eroded over the past 50 years or so. The "land grant mission," a phrase that used to carry clear and strong democratic meanings and significance for a lot of people, today has little meaning or resonance.

I experienced this firsthand last year at Cornell University, where I work (Cornell is New York State's land grant university). The president commissioned a set of panels to look into the question of Cornell's land grant mission in the twenty-first century: what it means, what should be done to pursue it in new ways, etc. I sat on one of those panels. It was a sobering experience. The discussions we had were almost lifeless. They were terribly flat, superficial, and vague. It was like being at a funeral wake for someone nobody really knew, but felt they were somehow

supposed to honor. On the one hand, there was a feeling of forced, artificial interest and concern. On the other hand, there were some people who used the panels as an opportunity to pronounce the land grant mission as being dead. They said it was good when it was relevant a hundred years ago, but now it's not, so let's just forget about it and get on with what matters now. But overall, there was just very little passion and very little enthusiasm for rallying around it as something worth preserving. Some of that was the way the process was being organized and facilitated, but I think much of it was just a reflection of the way people really think.

On the positive side, while this experience showed me that the land grant mission as a phrase has almost no resonance or meaning with many faculty, I learned from our discussions that faculty do care deeply about the issue of public or civic mission. In fact, it's the democratic or civic mission piece that motivates and inspires a lot of the faculty and staff who work at land grants. They just don't have much experience talking about it, and they have almost no understanding or even awareness of the nature and evolution of democratic identity and civic mission in land grant history.

**Brown:** And that bears directly on what you're doing....

**Peters:** Yes, that brings me to my work, to how I've been trying to pursue the democratic identity and civic mission questions in the land grant system. I've been pursuing them in two different (and hopefully complementary) ways. First, I've been doing some research into the history of the land grant idea, trying to understand its origins and evolution, with a specific focus on identifying its "democratic" dimensions. What I've found is a remarkably rich rhetoric of democracy linked directly to mission, identity, and work. In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that a hundred years ago, many people both inside and outside the system understood the land grant idea or mission to be centered on the practical pursuit and realization of democracy in American life.

There were many different ways the term "democracy" was used to characterize the nature and significance of land grant education in those days. The land grant idea was viewed as being "democratic" because it was supposed to place the control of higher education in the hands of the people, rather than elites or religious denominations. It was supposed to open up access to

higher education to the common people, the so-called "industrial classes." It marked an expansion of the curriculum beyond training for the elite professions by adding fields of study related to the gritty, everyday work of ordinary people. In the early days, that meant farming, engineering, what used to be called "home economics," and the like. It aimed to elevate the character, knowledge, and the political standing of the common people, to expand opportunities for social and economic mobility, to address public problems through applied research and public service. And especially through Cooperative Extension work, it aimed to develop in the common people a deep sense of civic responsibility, a cooperative spirit, and a range of skills and capacities related to active citizenship.

Now it's important to point out that none of these democratic ideals were ever fully achieved. Furthermore, there were people who held quite technocratic views of the land grant mission. So the key finding from my research is actually that the land grant story is one of tremendous, but never fully realized, democratic vision and work in continuous tension with a technocratic vision. There's a lot of nuance and complexity to the story, of course, but I think that's what it boils down to. My hope is that helping people to understand this can provide a certain kind of support and legitimacy for those who are committed to strengthening democratic identity and work today. They can see that what they're committed to is deeply rooted in land grant history. At the same time, they can see that it's always been tough work to stand for a democratic mission. There's actually a kind of hopefulness one can take from that realization. The struggle goes on. We can draw inspiration from what men and women did a hundred years ago as we make a stand for democratic ideals in the land grant system today. It's an awesome obligation, when you think about it. We've got to carry the tradition forward, even as we reshape it to fit a very different time.

The second way I've been trying to raise the democratic identity and civic mission questions is through creating platforms for critical reflection and action research into the civic dimensions of professional practice in the land grant system. That's what the project team I'm leading on public scholarship has been doing for the past few years. In essence, we're trying to identify and explore what "civic professionalism" might look like today in one of the major sectors of American higher education. This is something

that's never been done before, as far as I know. No one has ever tried to look so closely and carefully at civic practice in land grant education, certainly not with an action research approach. It's not an easy or simple project.

**Brown:** I'm sure it isn't.

**Peters:** One final word on the democratic identity question. We're at a very critical moment right now in the land grant system. The public-funding picture looks incredibly bleak. Everyone is scrambling for resources, and at the same time, cutting budgets to the bone, or in some cases, beyond the bone. There are pressures to move farther and farther down a path of private support, hinged on corporate "partnerships." For a lot of people, that's an uncomfortable pressure, because it goes against their view of what it means to be a public university. As connections with corporations grow closer, the distance between the campus and the community seems to be growing more and more distant. All this adds up to a lot of nervousness about the future. Morale is very low. People are starting to wonder whether or not this great national system of colleges and universities, with its system of Extension offices in nearly every county, is viable anymore. And they wonder exactly what, if anything, it means to be a "land grant" institution. There couldn't be a more important time to raise the democratic identity and civic mission questions. But how to raise them well, so that they serve as energizing and focusing questions, that's the key challenge.

**Brown:** You speak of and embrace what you call a "prophetic" approach to your work. Language is important. Why "prophetic"? Does it capture the "balance" you seek between being critical of land grant institutions and being hopeful about their prospects?

**Peters:** Again, the land grant system has never fully lived up to its best populist, democratic ideals. Consequently, there's been a long history of attacking it in very critical and confrontational ways for being racist, classist, and sexist, for destroying the environment and rural communities, for being in bed with

agribusiness corporations, etc., etc. There's enough truth to all of these alleged evils to substantiate the attacks. We can see that in two of the best critical exposés of the land grant system: Jim Hightower's *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times*, published in 1973, and Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America*, published in 1977. We can also see it in some of the scholarly work being done in more recent years from feminist standpoints: for example, in Mary Neth's fine book, *Preserving the Family Farm* (1995, Johns Hopkins University Press).

As good as these books are, and as much as the land grant system might deserve to be attacked, I worry about the politics behind such works, and their influence on people's attitudes and actions. The danger is that they will feed people's cynicism and their sense of innocence. During our work with land grant educators, I had an epiphany about this. I realized there's one book a lot of people are waiting for, a book that will finally show beyond any doubt how awful and hopelessly oppressive land grant institutions are, a book that will finally give people permission to give up on the land grant system and just walk away. And that's exactly the kind of book I'm committed to *not* doing.

I guess what my epiphany did for me was to help me feel more deeply than ever before the importance of taking a prophetic approach to the work of revitalizing or renewing the land grant system's civic mission and work. To take a prophetic approach, as I understand it, is to recall and reaffirm the best ideals and aims of a tradition and help provide vision and direction for how they might be achieved. This strikes me as being inherently both hopeful and critical. It's hopeful to the extent that it helps people recall the positive ideals and aims of a particular tradition and provides support and encouragement for their pursuit. It's critical to the extent it helps people understand why and how such ideals have been forgotten, marginalized, or misappropriated, and why they have been and always will be difficult to attain. In essence, then, a prophetic approach is focused more on hopeful possibilities than on depressing shortcomings or problems, but in a way mindful of the barriers (structural, cultural, etc.) that stand in the way of the possibilities.

In trying to figure out how to take a prophetic, action-research approach to building a practical theory of public scholarship in land grant education, I've been inspired and influenced by three sources. One is Harry Boyte, who taught me

by example what can be accomplished by recalling and renewing forgotten democratic traditions in American life. A second is Ella Baker, the civil rights leader who, of course, I never knew. Her organizing philosophy, according to Charles Payne in his wonderful book, *I've Got the Light of Freedom,* was based on a three-part strategy: find people who are already working, learn from them, and help them move into positions of leadership. The final inspiration for me is John Forester, a colleague of mine at Cornell, who uses an approach to narrative research that involves the construction of "practitioner profiles" built around practice stories captured in the edited transcripts of tape-recorded interviews. John's method, which I've adapted and modified, gave me a way to approach my research in civic professionalism in the land grant system. The practitioner profiles my students and I have developed help shed light on the actual work that real people are doing as they attempt to realize or pursue what I think of as the democratic promise of the land grant idea. I'm developing and using these profiles as theory-building and organizing tools in an action research project devoted to the challenge of strengthening the theory and practice of public scholarship in the land grant system.

One thing that's just been incredible to me is how powerfully inspiring these profiles are. Remarkably, and I would say unexpectedly, the profiles are turning out to contain the prophecy. They're showing us what civic mission and work can look like in land grant education, at the same time that they reveal the barriers and obstacles that stand in the way of achieving it. They bring the whole picture to life in a way nothing I've ever seen has, or even can, I think. But that's what happens when you get off your abstract soapbox and open your ears and eyes to what people are actually doing. For helping me get off my soapbox, I'd like to say here what I've said many times these past few years: thank you, John Forester!

**Brown:** Your focus on "action research" reminds me of Donald Schon's trenchant observation that we cannot do without it "as a legitimate and appropriately rigorous way of knowing and generating knowledge" — the kind of knowing already "embedded in competent practice."

**Peters:** I agree, wholeheartedly. I'd also add that we cannot do without it as a legitimate way to develop hope. This is a key principle that's guiding how we're approaching our research into

the theory and practice of public scholarship in the land grant system. Following Ella Baker's simple formula, our research is built around trying to find people in the land grant system who are "already working," that is, who are already practicing public scholarship, to learn from them through constructing profiles of them, and then to create platforms for critical reflection and dialogue leading to actions aimed at developing and strengthening the theory and practice of public scholarship. Since we've started this research, I've never felt so hopeful. I think the hope is generated from giving people who are doing good work space to tell their stories, to remember in public what their dreams and aims are, what's motivating them, what they care about and believe in. It's not a self-congratulatory thing. The hope actually comes from people being given a chance to talk in public about what they're reaching for but not quite attaining. Suddenly, they realize they're not alone, that there are others reaching for the same things they're reaching for. Now suddenly they can imagine actually getting where they want to go. That's where the hope comes in.

***"...hope is generated from giving people who are doing good work space to tell their stories."***

**Brown:** In your recent work, you have said your understanding of public scholarship has changed significantly. What happened to cause that shift?

**Peters:** The short answer is I got out of my office, or off my soapbox, to use the metaphor I used a little while ago, and started interviewing and talking with scholars who were actually working with publics. That's what changed my understanding. But it would probably be more accurate to say my understanding has developed rather than changed, because what I started with was very vague and abstract. Now it's much more concrete, and I have lots of specific stories to illustrate it. Through these stories, I've come to understand public scholarship as a craft that integrates civic and intellectual capacities and motivations in ways that end up producing products having value for both academic disciplines and specific publics in specific contexts. That's about as concise as I can put it, without going into the many questions such an understanding raises.

**Brown:** Should "public scholarship" be accountable to both a group of disciplinary peers *and* a public? Can those very different partners with very different learning expectations be satisfied at the same time?

**Peters:** The answer to your first question is yes. It has to be.

Otherwise, at least with respect to how we're defining and developing the concept, it isn't public scholarship.

Your second question names the central challenge public scholars must be able to meet. While it's not an easy challenge, I have plenty of evidence from my research that it is indeed possible. There are scholars in a wide variety of disciplines across the land grant system who have managed to do work seen as excellent in the eyes of their disciplinary peers, and at the same time, is also seen as useful and valuable in the eyes of specific publics.

Let me give you an example. Dan Decker, a professor in the Department of Natural Resources in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University has built his entire academic career, from graduate school in the early 1970s to today, being deeply engaged in the public work of wildlife management in New York State. He cofounded the Human Dimensions Research Unit in his department, which provides Dan and his colleagues and students with an ongoing platform for engaging in scholarly public work devoted to the transformation of both theory and practice in wildlife management in New York State and beyond. They've intentionally integrated their practical, problem-solving work with specific communities in New York that are facing wildlife management problems with their scholarly work of developing theory and concepts about wildlife management. Products have come out of this work that are seen as important and valuable both in his discipline and in real communities. It's a great success story, one I've learned a lot from.

*"Without question, public scholarship is against the grain of academic culture."*

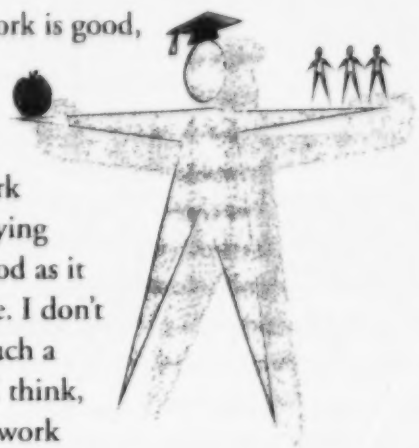
While I've been focusing on finding success stories at this stage of my work, I'm certainly aware of the fact there are significant structural, cultural, economic, and political barriers making the practice of public scholarship difficult. Without question, public scholarship is against the grain of academic culture. That's why I think it's important to create platforms for action research that can serve as vehicles for institutional change.

**Brown:** You have pointed out the natural sciences are not getting sufficient attention by those interested in "public scholarship." Could you expand on this?

**Peters:** The natural scientists are the heart of the public scholarship story in the land grant system, especially in colleges of agriculture. They make up the majority of the 50 or so public scholars we've found and interviewed over the past few years. These are people who have academic homes in departments of

horticulture, natural resources, entomology, agronomy, plant breeding, plant pathology, animal science, and the like. But they don't just relate to and work with their disciplinary peers. They also have organized, ongoing partnerships and relationships with people and groups outside the academic world in specific communities and places that serve as platforms for their scholarship. They have a very deeply felt concern for the health and well-being of rural communities and the environment, and a commitment to enter the public realm and do public work around these issues as natural scientists.

A brief example will help illustrate what I'm talking about. There's a guy named Ron Prokopy, a senior professor in the department of entomology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, who has spent the past 20 years or so working on something called "integrated pest management" (IPM) in apple production in Massachusetts. He's an accomplished natural scientist with an academic grounding in entomology, but he travels the state all year long, doing collaborative field experiments with growers, engaging them in formal and informal deliberations, and talking and working with policymakers. He's a scientist, but his work has very strong and well-developed civic dimensions. He has excellent intuitive political instincts and skills. He and his colleagues have organized and developed deep working relationships with apple growers, citizen groups, and government agencies across the state. They've made tremendous contributions to improving the environment in Massachusetts by helping growers to dramatically reduce the use of pesticides. Their work has also helped produce economic benefits to the apple industry.



At the foundation of all this work is good, rigorous science and scholarship. All the public work with people and publics Ron does is completely intertwined with his work as a scientist and scholar. I'm not saying everything he does is good, or as good as it could be, especially his civic practice. I don't know enough about him to make such a judgment. But I do know enough, I think, to see there is a civic practice to his work that is inseparable from his work as a

scientific scholar. That's why I would call Ron a public scholar. But here's the interesting irony, or problem: the civic side of Ron's practice, as with the other natural scientists I've interviewed, is completely invisible because no one ever talks about it, including Ron. There's a complete silence about this dimension of these faculty members' work. This silence really troubles me, because it leads people to believe the civic side of their work isn't important, or it's an optional frill. But it's not optional, not if we really want the products someone like Ron produces.

**Brown:** I was struck by your observation that those doing public scholarship must also, at times, be public organizers — "organizing environments for learning." What does this involve, what does the scholar have to do?

**Peters:** We've certainly been learning in our research that good organizing is absolutely key to good public scholarship. For a scholar to do effective public scholarship, she or he needs to establish long-term, focused, and well-resourced platforms to bring people together to do public work around a common issue and problem. Public scholars must be skilled at building trustworthy, respectful relationships with a diverse set of players having interests and power relevant to the public problem or issue at hand. Ron Prokopy's work around pest management in apple production in Massachusetts is a good illustration of the importance of the organizing point. Ron contributes in important ways to the organizing. But, and this is important, he isn't the lead organizer. He hired someone else to do that, someone with a strong scientific background, but also with sharp political instincts and talents. So Ron's story shows us that scholars often need to recruit others to take the lead in the organizing work. After all, Ron is a scientist first, and he needs to have enough time and energy to do his science.

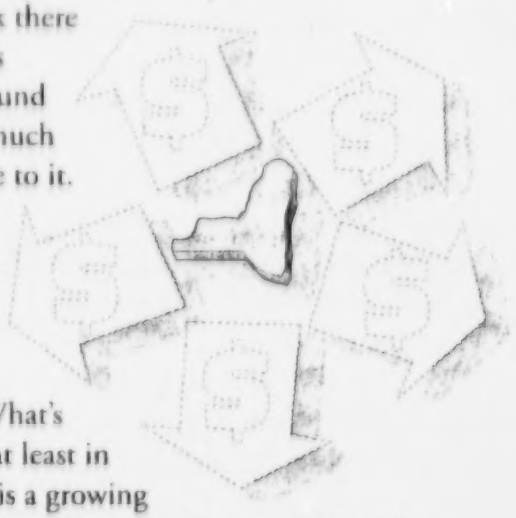
***"...scholars often need to recruit others to take the lead in the organizing work."***

Your question about what scholars have to do depends on their intentions, and the nature of the situation. There are many different approaches to organizing that serve different purposes and have different kinds of goals and outcomes. I'm especially interested in organizing that doesn't just fix technical or instrumental problems, but also facilitates significant learning and capacity-building, and builds ongoing relationships that can be put to use in a whole variety of ways.

**Brown:** I have heard you use the term "movement" to describe what's happening around terms like "civic mission" and

"public scholarship." Do you see yourself as part of such a "movement" and, if so, what are some of its possibilities?

**Peters:** I'd like to think there is a movement of sorts that's beginning to take shape around these terms, and I do very much want my work to contribute to it. But it might be more accurate to say that while we don't yet have a movement, the ground is becoming more and more fertile for one to be built. What's making the ground fertile, at least in places like New York State, is a growing economic crisis. The crisis gives Cornell a major window of opportunity to explore democratic identity and civic mission themes with a lot more urgency and seriousness than it has in recent decades. It's incredibly sobering when you look at the details of the crisis in the state. People are starting to compare our situation with the Great Depression. The question for us is, what can Cornell, this world-class research university, do to help people and communities deal with the crisis? What's our civic mission and work in these tough times, and how can that work be as serious and productive in scholarly terms as it is useful and productive in civic terms? I want my research to help provide a platform for exploring these questions in ways that energize and organize action and hope. I'm discovering the practice stories in the profiles we're developing can be tremendously effective tools for this. You can't help but be hopeful and energized when you read some of them. The integrity and commitment you see in people's work and lives is just wonderful. If we can surface that and build on it, we'll be getting somewhere.



**Brown:** Before we conclude, Scott, I couldn't help noticing you include a brief quote of Liberty Hyde Bailey in the signature space of your e-mails:"Spirit counts for more than Knowledge." Could you say more about the context and meaning of the quote?

**Peters:** Bailey, who lived from 1858-1954, was a world-renowned scientist and educator. Among other notable features of his remarkable life, he wrote more than 60 books, served as dean of Cornell University's College of Agriculture, chaired President

Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life, and was elected president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1926.

I've been working on a project with a colleague editing a collection of Bailey's writings into a reader, bringing a selection of his most compelling and enduring writings back into print. In beginning this work a few years ago, I was combing through Bailey's extensive writings in an attempt to figure out what his core teachings are. I like the idea of a person having a set of teachings, or of their life, the way they live it, as containing a set of teachings. Of all the wonderful passages from his books and papers that I wrote down as candidates for a list of his core teachings (and there were many), the one line that seemed to capture what he taught more than anything else was "Spirit counts for more than Knowledge."

The line comes from a book he wrote in 1903 called *The Nature-Study Idea*. The context of the quote was in relation to the question of what young people need to learn or know to be educated into sympathy with nature, or to come to love nature, in order to then live responsible lives in relation to nature. For Bailey, the answer to the question was that spirit counts for more than knowledge. In other words, memorizing the names of plants and cold, dry facts about them is less important to the project of developing a responsible sympathy with nature than developing a certain kind of spirit toward nature. Thus, the educational philosophy and pedagogy Bailey promoted, for both youth and adults, was focused more on direct, original experience than on reading and memorization.

One of the reasons I love the "spirit counts for more than knowledge" line is because it runs smack against our expectations of what an accomplished scientist might teach, especially one who came into the height of his intellectual powers at a major research university during the Progressive era. You might expect such a man to have taught that knowledge counts for everything, especially scientific knowledge. Or that spirit doesn't count. But Bailey didn't teach these things. He was no narrow technocrat. Of course he was committed to good science. But he was an idealist and a populist who was also deeply committed to both democracy and what we would today call "sustainability."

I think the reason Bailey taught that spirit counts for more than knowledge is because he knew that both democracy and the

project of living in harmony and sympathy with nature are impossible to pursue or achieve without a certain kind of generous, cooperative, and humane spirit, and that while knowledge is certainly important in both of these pursuits, nothing is more important or powerful than the spirit that moves people to creative, generous, and responsible democratic action. Also, while science and scientific knowledge might help us to live in better harmony with nature, for Bailey, the spirit with which we approach nature is of greater importance than the knowledge we have of it.

One last point on why I put this line in my e-mail signature. I think it serves as a reminder of what Bailey believed the land grant mission and land grant education ought to be guided by. And the deeper I go in my work of building a practical theory of public scholarship in land grant education, the more I realize the line also captures the essence of public scholarship. The public scholars I have come to know in the land grant system are infused with a civic spirit that actually drives them more than their quest for knowledge. They have shown me what Bailey's line looks like when it is brought to life.

It's a wonderful thing to see, and a real source of hope and inspiration to me.

**Brown:** Thank you, Scott.

# *THE METAPHYSICAL CLUB*

— Louis Menand

## Lisa Morrison, Reviewer

*The Metaphysical Club* serves as a collective biography following the intellectual lives of four great American thinkers: Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935) Supreme Court justice whose rulings created the modern concept of free speech; William James (1842-1910) philosopher who went on to found American psychology; Charles Saunders Peirce (1839-1914) scientist, statistician, and founder of the social theory of knowledge; and Thomas Dewey (1859-1952) philosopher and educational reformer. The author, Louis Menand, professor of English at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, traces their connections focusing on how their ideas were shaped by their interactions with each other, their life experiences, and contemporaneous discoveries and developments in a broad variety of fields. The focus is on the development of the concept of pragmatism, a philosophy credited largely to James (though he gave credit for the idea to Peirce). Pragmatism is an "idea about ideas"; it views ideas as social and evolving, rather than abstract and absolute. The beauty in this work is that it shows how this modern American philosophy emerged through the social interactions of the protagonists — demonstrating their point eloquently.

Menand covers an ambitiously broad range of historical topics: the abolitionist movement, the Civil War, Vermont Transcendentalism, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, the law of errors, the famous Howland will case, and the Pullman strikes, to name just a few. Each are tied in some way to Holmes, James, Dewey, Peirce, and their evolving ideas, though at times the links can be hard to follow. Despite the sometimes weak connections, overall the book serves as an outstanding overview of this particular period of American history and the development of American philosophy in the context of modernization. It is informative, thought provoking, and well researched, as well as entertaining.

Pragmatism, as portrayed by Menand, is the philosophy that

knowledge is produced by groups, not found by individuals. This perspective emphasizes tolerance and pluralism and suggests we should maintain a healthy degree of skepticism regarding our own convictions. Rather than defining and describing pragmatism Menand, remaining true to its meaning, illustrates how it was produced through the four founders' experiences and interactions and, in turn, how it shaped their contributions to American society. As Menand notes, "Pragmatism was the product of a group of individuals and it took shape from the way they bounced off one another, their circumstances, and the mysteries of their unreproducible personalities."

*...they questioned whether moral certainty is attainable or even desirable.*

Holmes dropped out of Harvard to fight in the Civil War. The war was a life-altering experience for Holmes: he was injured three times and witnessed some of the most horrifically violent battles of the war. His experience caused him to lose faith in certainty, as Holmes came to believe that "certainty leads to violence." This reaction to the war would serve as the basis for the development of pragmatism. The violence of the Civil War led each of them to "look for a conception of belief and judgment that would eschew certainty" and "lose their belief in beliefs and certainty." Ultimately, they questioned whether moral certainty is attainable or even desirable.

Though James did not fight in the Civil War, he had what Menand refers to as his version of the Civil War. James spent time working with the scientist Louis Agassiz in Brazil looking for evidence to support polygenism (the idea that human races and species have distinct origins and are immutable). Essentially, Agassiz sought evidence to support his racist ideology. What James learned from this experience was how *not* to do science. James observed the indigenous populations and wrote of their exceptional refinement in his diary, "Is it race or circumstance?" Menand identifies this experience as the beginning of relational thinking for James, and the beginnings of his pragmatism.

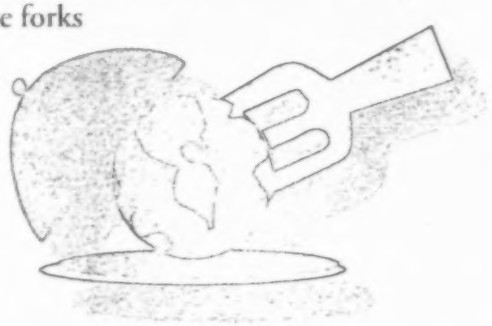
Soon after this, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*. Agassiz's polygenism quickly fell out of favor among intellectuals and the public alike. Darwin's ideas about the

adaptability of organisms strongly influenced the development of pragmatism. The relationships between species becomes more important in this context than their relationship to some ideal type. According to pragmatism, ideas behave much like species in natural selection. Pragmatism suggests that ideas are provisional responses to particular circumstances and their survival depends not on their stability but rather on their adaptability. There are no longer correct ideas out there to be found but rather ideas are produced through social interactions.

*Knowing ideas can be paralleled to knowing the location of stars.*

Peirce called Darwin's theory "the law of higgledy-piggledy" for its emphasis on randomness. Peirce's work focuses on what it means to know in a world of such randomness. His answer to this dilemma reflects the core of his theory of social thought. According to Menand: "In a universe in which events are uncertain and perception is fallible, knowing cannot be a matter of an individual mind 'mirroring' reality. Each mind reflects differently — even the same mind reflects differently at different moments — and, in any case, reality doesn't stand still long enough to be accurately mirrored. Peirce's conclusion was that knowledge must therefore be social." This philosophy also draws on Peirce's experiences in statistics and the law of errors. Astronomers use the law of errors to approximate the location of stars. This law accepts that individual measures are likely to be inaccurate, and only through multiple measures can we approximate reality. Knowing ideas can be paralleled to knowing the location of stars: we cannot know the absolute truth and the only way to approximate reality is to increase the number of perspectives.

In addition to describing the social and historical context of the development of pragmatism, Menand links it to the social contributions made by Dewey and Holmes especially. Pragmatism was a large part of Dewey's educational and democratic philosophies and the reforms that followed from them. Pragmatism's main tenant is that "Ideas are not out there waiting to be discovered but are tools like forks and knives and microchips that people devise to cope with the world." This belief was largely a prerequisite for the educational reforms initiated by Dewey. Pragmatism has clear implications for who should be



educated and what the curriculum should entail. At the University Elementary School at the University of Chicago (a.k.a. the Dewey School), Dewey put pragmatism into practice. At that time, schools were dominated by rote memorization and the transfer of out-of-context information from teacher to student. The new pedagogy at the laboratory school was consistent with pragmatism in two key ways. First, pragmatism sees knowledge as created socially and the Dewey School emphasized group activities. Second, one tenet of pragmatism is that belief is inseparable from action. At the school, knowledge was seen as inseparable from doing.

One interpretation of this educational philosophy is that higher education should not be reserved for those elite few deemed qualified to discover immutable ideas, but rather open and relevant to everyone who copes with the world. If ideas are socially produced, it follows that to advance knowledge the number of those participating in the production of ideas should be maximized. Pragmatism clearly has implications for democracy and is reflected in Dewey's theory of democracy. Dewey promoted democracy in every area of life and defined it as associated living on the basis of tolerance and equality. As pragmatism relies on social interaction for the generation of knowledge, democracy in his terms relies on full participation for decision making.

Holmes applied pragmatism to law, and one result of his 25-year tenure as a Supreme Court justice was the strengthening of the right to free speech. Since he believed that ideas are produced and evolve socially, free speech would be necessary to protect the marketplace of ideas. Interestingly, it was not out of wanting to protect individual rights that led him to rule in support of free speech, but rather, he saw free speech as a means of protecting the marketplace of ideas in America.

The conclusion mentions the decline of pragmatism during the Cold War (when the social climate was ripe for absolutes again), and its recent revival. That Menand fails to take a stand or speculate on its current applications or future — other than saying its future applications are unclear — is a weakness. He could have linked the revival of pragmatism to the expansion of civil society or the practice of community deliberation but he falls short of that. I believe this is a missed opportunity. On the other hand, one could argue that the story itself speaks to the importance of these concepts without the author having to state it directly.

# AFTERWORD

## By David Mathews

This issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* continues a theme that has been running throughout several issues — compelling personal accounts of faculty members coming to terms with the public world. Scott Peters at Cornell and Harry Boyte at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs are finding more cases of academics who want to make a difference in public life as well as academe. The Kettering Foundation Press hopes to publish both studies later this year.

Those who think about future directions for the *Exchange* (many of whom have articles in this publication) are now focused on an overarching question: Is it possible to reassert the claims of a "strong democracy" on academe? Ben Barber attempted to do that by organizing a session on the topic at the 2002 meeting of the American Political Science Association. As Steven Brint and Charles Levy have shown in a study on civic engagement, it's a formidable challenge.

These two authors look at the attention given to civic matters by the leadership of professional associations and institutions of higher education. Universities and colleges, they argue, are "strategically important" because they are the channels through which individuals enter the professions. Based on their analysis of more than 160 speeches over a 120-year period, Brint and Levy found what I consider an alarming decline in concern for community and civic life. This isn't a recent phenomenon. The slow erosion of attention to broad sociocultural purposes began in the 1920s.

Leaders of our professions and institutions have been increasingly preoccupied with "internal affairs" and "instrumental and technical achievement," Brint and Levy say. Their research shows that even when college and university presidents commented on matters outside the boundaries of their institutions, they spoke only in the vaguest terms about "serving civilization" or the need for a "'higher vision' of life." Notably, references to civic purpose were almost always absent in the

speeches of the presidents of private liberal arts colleges and humanistic academic associations. Of course, there have been exceptions; Brint and Levy found one institution whose presidents described its mission as educating "thoughtful and productive citizens who could contribute to the resolution of public problems." But this lone exception is so inconsistent with the pronouncements of other leaders in higher education that it reinforces the overall perception of a declining concern for civic values.

Though this study is impressive, members of the informal steering committee for the *Exchange* have been hesitant to conclude that higher education has entirely abandoned its civic mission. Even Brint and Levy, for that matter, were reluctant to go so far. In their analysis of professional organizations, they found "less a decline of social purpose . . . than a bureaucratization."

Lack of attention to civic life could be the result of academic leaders assuming that their institutions have already satisfied the claims of democracy. Administrators point with justifiable pride to worthwhile efforts in promoting diversity and encouraging personal service. Also academic leaders seem less inclined to describe their institutions as *serving* the public good and more disposed to claim that they *are* public goods. The implication is that doing what academe normally does, and doing it well, is enough. From this perspective, a series that raises concerns about democracy wouldn't be relevant. Democracy is a moot issue.

Higher education's attention today appears to be elsewhere, such as on matters of access — and for good reason. Postsecondary education is now the primary avenue to a good job. Everyone must go through its doors, which has never been true before. Since access is threatened by rising costs and declining financial support from both government and private sources, there isn't much question about what will command the greatest attention.

America's civic life should be a higher priority. The case rests on two propositions. One is that there is more to democracy than representative government and the other is democracy-writ-large is at a critical turning point at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Robert Putnam is alarmed that we are "bowling alone" and the social bridges that support our democracy have deteriorated. Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina find troubling changes in the nature of our civic organizations and public life.

Between 1960 and 1990, new voices entered the mainstream making the political system more representative of the population. These groups formed their own organizations in Washington, significantly increasing the number of interest groups lobbying the government. At the same time, new strategies shifted more power to the bureaucracies and courts, while term limits and citizen-led referenda drew power away from the legislative and executive branches. And the "place of place," as Martha Derthick puts it, referring to geographic communities, has also lost standing as a consideration in federal policy.

*Distrust in the political system morphed into alienation.*

In addition, the character of our civic organizations has been changing. Organizations with chapters that were rooted in local networks (which were also transnational) and that marshaled hands-on, collective action have been declining. Mass membership has become less important than a large war chest. So members have turned into donors, substituting money for public work. Volunteer leadership, in turn, has given way to professional staffs that use their funds to organize media campaigns that will influence legislation — usually on very specific issues.

Ironically, during a period of greater openness in the federal government when the policy was to promote "maximum feasible participation," the citizenry actually lost a good deal of confidence in the government — along with their bureaucracies. Distrust in the political system morphed into alienation. Americans came to the conclusion that they were being pushed out of politics by a political elite, leaders who seemed to live in a separate world where winning elections was more important than solving problems. And people worried that the balance between general interests and particular interests had shifted away from the commonweal.

At century's end, pundits were puzzled. Why had public confidence fallen so precipitously at a time of unprecedented openness in government? Why were college students heavily invested in service to others but deeply cynical about the political system — and so disinclined to vote?

By the 1990s, some countertrends were visible; Harry Boyte called them "backyard revolutions." National organizations that were hardly radical talked of "taking the system back." And students of public administration like George Frederickson worried that we had spent most of the twentieth century building institutions and neglecting communities, only to be reminded that communities were the first line of defense against our most wicked

social problems — those that are most resistant to our greatest expertise and our largest federal programs. Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland found civic innovations springing up around the country.

Still, democracy entered the twenty-first century with a lot of unfinished business. For instance, is ours to be a direct democracy? Even though voting to elect representatives has declined, referenda on local issues have become more common. We seem to be bypassing legislative bodies, but are we also going to bypass town meeting democracy, where people can deliberate with one another before they vote? Some argue that it is dangerous for voters to go to the polls without an opportunity to turn first reactions into more shared and reflective opinions.

If not a direct democracy, would we prefer a consumer democracy, one where the government treats citizens as though they are customers in a store of services? Critics of consumer democracy, however, insist that Americans *own* the store and they have to be producers who make democracy's public goods.

And what are we going to do about "wicked problems," such as racial conflicts and hard-core poverty, which require whole communities to respond? What will prompt that level of activism, particularly if citizens have come to doubt one another just as they doubt their institutional leaders? Do we have the kind of civic organizations anymore that can organize broad-based engagement? If we do put more responsibility on local organizations, are they to be substitutes for or supplements to government?

What do colleges and universities know about all of this unfinished business? The answer isn't clear. That is why the *Exchange* has begun to consider ways of raising this issue, not to criticize the good work that is already going on, but to ask if something else isn't required.

Concentrating on the problems of civic life might have indirect but important benefits for colleges and universities. In the past, when they have responded to new challenges as they weighed democracy's claims, these institutions have enriched their sense of mission. They have been reminded that they are part of the greater causes of liberty and self-rule rather than businesslike organizations to be judged only by their efficiency.

In the colonial era, colleges promoted piety and the study of the classics for a ministerial elite. But the struggle for

independence changed seminaries of erudition into seminaries of sedition. As early as 1725, Harvard students began debating whether the legitimacy of government rests on the consent of the government instead of concentrating solely on abstractions of theology and metaphysics. Later, under the leadership of Ezra Stiles, Yale made democracy's cause, its cause. Students deliberated over whether a standing army would be dangerous in the new country. George Washington provides an even more direct example of the way democracy's claims affected higher learning. He wanted a national university that would bring Americans with different backgrounds together so they might overcome "those jealousies and prejudices" that would otherwise divide them. He was speaking primarily of regional differences and drawing on his experiences with the Continental Army, where mixing citizens had created a sense of national unity. But the need to expose all segments of American society to one another — in the interest of democracy — is still relevant. It is the rationale for diversity on campus.

The histories of land grant institutions and community colleges are other chapters in the story of democracy's influence. The effort to continue to expand suffrage, to reach beyond the original propertied elite to those who were not landowners but workers in agriculture and industry, led to the creation of what were once called "people's colleges." Allan Nevins said that the most important force in establishing the land grant institutions was unquestioningly democracy. In time, as Scott Peters has shown, the democratic sensibilities of pioneers in Extension education such as Liberty Hyde Bailey led to a type of scholarly inquiry that valued both the spirit of knowledge as well as its technical content. Much the same might be said about democracy's influence on the junior or community college movement. Initially responsive to the need for good public schools (by preparing teachers), these institutions made rekindling the spirit of community part of their mission in 1988 because of concern with social fragmentation.

So what could this publication do to bring democracy's claim to bear on higher education in a way that its invigorating influence might continue to inform? Here are some strategies that have been mentioned so far in the discussions.

Maybe the unfinished business of democracy is already having an effect, and the *Exchange* needs to identify those initiatives that

reflect what Ben Barber calls "strong democracy" and others describe as "citizen democracy." Here and there, centers, institutes, and projects have appeared using terms like "civic engagement" and "public life." Do these initiatives tell us something about an expanded concept of democracy and about roles for higher education that go beyond teaching, research, and service?

There are faculty and staff within these institutes whose work is based on an understanding of the public having enormous implications for engaging colleges and universities in democratic life. They can be found in a variety of places: large land grants like The Ohio State University, prestigious Ivy League universities like the University of Pennsylvania, and dynamic community colleges like Florida's Gulf Coast Community College. These centers treat "the public" as an active force, one that isn't static as an audience, constituency, or collection of interest groups. This sort of public develops out of the practices of collective decision making and action. As I have said in past issues, these institutions don't direct those practices. Instead, they create environments on and off campus, where a democratic citizenry can come into being. In creating this space, they are leading their institutions into a role beyond but not incompatible with teaching, research, and service.

Bill Sullivan (in his study of academic disciplines) and Claire Snyder (in her paper on the civic mission of early political science), suggest another possibility for bringing democratic claims to bear. Perhaps the *Exchange* should follow their lead and look for further evidence of civic missions in the disciplines and professions. Scott Peters has done just that in his article on Extension, a field that set out to temper the overly technical, positivistic, and instrumental proclivities of academe. Another example: Jim Carey's revisionist history of newspapers. His work had a great deal to do with inspiring a movement described as public or civic journalism. Carey revived traditions of his profession as a civic craft, an interpretation that suggested new ways of reporting the news today.

Still another strategy for the *Exchange* to pursue might be to do more on the nature of democracy's unfinished business. There are a number of in-depth studies of politics at the end of the twentieth century to draw from. David Brian Robertson has assembled a collection of essays on the 1970s, *Loss of Confidence,* which describes some of the challenges confronting us in the early

twenty-first century. E. J. Dionne's critique in *Why Americans Hate Politics* continues to be relevant. So too, is James Morone's analysis of the unintended consequences of the government effort to encourage public participation in *The Democratic Wish*. These books are not only useful in identifying the problems of democracy but also in showing that there are different concepts of democracy — even when writers use the same language. It could be rewarding to tease out these differences; they often contain important insights into the evolving understanding of how our political system should work. Take "deliberation," "deliberative democracy," and "public deliberation." Most authors use these terms to describe informed decision making. But what informs us? Some scholars emphasize the factual information that individuals need and the importance of reasoned argument — all to the good. Others call for the creation of shared knowledge or, more precisely, the "practical wisdom" we need to guide us when we have to choose among alternative courses of action in the face of conflicts over what is most valuable to us. Maybe the *Exchange* should focus on what a democratic people need to know in order to govern themselves — and how they can know it.

***...the* Exchange *should focus on what a democratic people need to know in order to govern themselves.***

Then there is the matter of audiences. Are there groups not represented on the current mailing list that could contribute to articulating democracy's claims? If so, shouldn't the *Exchange* publish articles that speak for and to them? A broader audience might include people outside of academe who are face-to-face with wicked problems, the collapse of community, and the erosion of our capacity for self-government. Speaking to and hearing from community foundations, local civic organizations, and grassroots associations might help suggest new opportunities for higher education. Still another potential audience may be those in Congress and the federal agencies who support higher education. Does the U.S. Department of Agriculture have a vested interest in the civic engagement of the institutions it supports? Wouldn't that be interesting!

The audience most relevant for the *Exchange* might be trustees of colleges and universities who, in theory, are the link between a democratic society and its institutions of higher education. The potential for a lively exchange on democratic imperatives and trustee responsibilities was first suggested by an interview with Bill Hubbard, a member of the board for the University of South Carolina, which appeared in the 2001 issue. That potential,

however, might not be realized if Brint and Levy's findings of a declining commitment to civic values on the part of presidents also hold true for boards of trustees. Has there been a slow erosion in the emphasis on democratic missions and a buildup of attention to internal, managerial issues? Perhaps it would be productive to ask for comments on this question.

By laying out these options for the editorial direction of the *Exchange,* I am proposing that this publication would profit from any comments its readers have on the strategies I have discussed or suggestions of alternatives. Welcome to the conversation.

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# CONTRIBUTORS

David W. Brown is coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange* and a professor of professional practice at New School University's Milano School of Management and Urban Policy. He authored *When Strangers Cooperate* (Free Press, 1995) and *Organization Smarts* (Amacom, 2002).

Barry Checkoway is professor of Social Work and Urban Planning, and founding director of the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning, at the University of Michigan. His present projects include Lifting New Voices, a national initiative to increase youth participation in organizational development and community change.

Maria Farland is a member of the faculty of English and American Studies at Fordham University in the Bronx. She is currently completing a book on modern literature and the rise of scientific professionalism in the United States. She has published articles on Edith Wharton, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Gertrude Stein.

Peter Levine is deputy director of CIRCLE (The Center for Research & Information on Civic Learning & Engagement), a research scholar at the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, and an associate of the Kettering Foundation. He is the author of four books: most recently, *The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

Andrew Light is assistant professor of environmental philosophy and director of the Environmental Conservation Education Program at New York University. Light is the author of more than fifty articles and book chapters on environmental ethics, philosophy of technology, and philosophy of film. He has edited or coedited thirteen books, including *Environmental Pragmatism* (Routledge, 1996), *Social Ecology after Bookchin* (Guilford, 1998), *Technology and the Good Life?* (Chicago, 2000), and *Moral and Political Reasoning in Environmental Practice* (MIT, 2003). He is the author of *The Reel Arguments: Film, Philosophy, and Social Criticism* (Westview, 2003), and coeditor of the journal, *Philosophy and Geography*.

David Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation, was secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Ford administration and, before that, president of The University of Alabama. He has written extensively on education, political theory, southern history, public policy, and international problem solving. His most recent books are *Why Public Schools? Whose Public Schools?* (NewSouth Books, 2003), *Is There a Public for Public Schools?* (Kettering Foundation Press, 1996), and a revised second edition of *Politics for People* (University of Illinois Press, 1999).

Lisa Morrison is a doctoral candidate in sociology at The Ohio State University and a doctoral research fellow at the Kettering Foundation. Her research focuses on comparative democratization and human rights. Her dissertation is a cross-national empirical analysis of the relationship between ethnic conflict and democratization. She has also published research on civil society in the former Soviet Union (now Russia).

Scott J. Peters is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at Cornell University. His research is devoted to exploring the historical foundations, evolution, and contemporary renewal of Cooperative Extension's civic mission and public work tradition, and their connection to the democratic promise of the land grant idea in American higher education.

Jennifer Santos is a sophomore and biology major at Fordham University in the Bronx. She was born and raised in the Bronx, and went to public high school in New York City.

Deborah Witte is a program officer for the Kettering Foundation and coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange*. This fall she will begin doctoral studies in leadership at the McGregor School-Antioch University.

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